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THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION

BY

W. ROBERTSON NICOLL

The
CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION
CHRIST *and* . . . .
RECENT CRITICISM

EVENING POST

The Church's One Foundation. Christ *and* Recent Criticism

By the Rev. W.m Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., Editor of "The Expositor," "The Expositor's Bible" "The Expositor's Greek Testament," etc.

"There is in the Bible above all the personal Christ, a Personality which men could not have imagined, a Personality which must be historical, and which must be Divine."—Professor Robertson Smith

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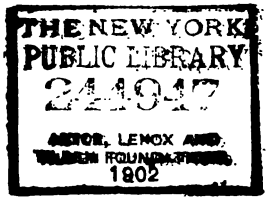
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TO MY FAITHFUL FRIEND

IAN MACLAREN

PREFATORY NOTE

THIS little book is made up out of articles which have already been published in the *British Weekly*. They have been carefully revised, and some notes and references have been added. But I have endeavoured to make the book intelligible to the plain man. The questions discussed cannot be left to experts. They concern not merely the health, but the existence of the Church.

I have to acknowledge gratefully the kind help given by the Rev. David Smith, M.A., of Tulliallan, and also the helpful suggestions of the Bishop of Durham, and Mr. George Augustus Simcox, Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford.

HAMPSTEAD,
November, 1901.

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Introduction

THE controversy about Christ is essentially a controversy about facts. Christianity is not a sentiment, not a philosophy, not even a theological system, but a historical religion. As Westcott says in his last book, "Christ the Word, the Son of God, is Himself the Gospel. The Incarnation, the Nativity, the Transfiguration, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, are the final and absolute revelation to man of God's nature and will. These facts contain, implicitly under the conditions of earth, all that we can know of self, the world, and God, so far as the knowledge affects our religious life." Or, as Church

puts it: "The Christian Church is the most potent fact in the most important ages of the world's progress. It is an institution like the world itself, which has grown up by its own strength and according to its own principle of life, full of good and evil, having as the law of its fate to be knocked about in the stern development of events, exposed, like human society, to all kinds of vicissitudes and alternations, giving occasion to many a scandal, and shaking the faith and loyalty of many a son, showing in ample measure the wear and tear of its existence, battered, injured, sometimes degenerate, sometimes improved in one way or another, since those dim and long-distant days when its course began; but showing in all these ways what a real thing it is, never in the extremity of storms and ruin, never in the

deepest degradation of its unfaithfulness losing hold of its own central unchanging faith, and never in its worst days of decay and corruption losing hold of the power of self-correction and hope of recovery. . . . And the Christian Church is founded on a definite historic fact—that Jesus Christ Who was crucified, rose from the dead; and coming from such an author, it comes to us, bringing with it the Bible. . . . A so-called Christianity, ignoring or playing with Christ's Resurrection, and using the Bible as a sort of Homer, may satisfy a class of clever and cultivated persons. . . . But it is well in so serious a matter not to confuse things. This new religion may borrow from Christianity as it may borrow from Plato, or from Buddhism, or Confucianism, or even Islam. But it is not Christianity. . . . A Christianity which tells

us to think of Christ doing good, but to forget and put out of sight Christ risen from the dead, is not true to life. It is as delusive to the conscience and the soul as it is illogical to reason."

When dealing with criticism, old and new, this is never to be forgotten. The Church cannot without disloyalty and cowardice quarrel with criticism as such. It is not held absolutely to any theory of any book. It asks, and it is entitled to ask, the critic: Do you believe in the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Christ? If his reply is in the affirmative, his process and results are to be examined earnestly and calmly. If he replies in the negative, he has missed the way, and has put himself outside the Church of Christ. If he refuses to answer, his silence has to be interpreted. Certain conclusions about the Gospel have been

judged by all who maintain them to be fatal to the historic creed. Some one some day may accept them, and be able to show that his predecessors and their antagonists were illogical, that certain critical views may be held in perfect consistency with a loyal faith in the great revealing acts of God. But he must be prepared to show how this is so, especially at a time when many critics frankly declare that the Incarnation and Resurrection of the Son of God are no longer credible. Every part of the Church Catholic must define its position and defend it.

The issue is old, and must constantly recur. The Protestant Synod of France discussed it most ably at their memorable meeting in 1872. It was the first meeting of the Synod for more than two hundred years. The Court had been silenced by

the power of the State. A desire for unshackled freedom had grown up, especially after the fall of the Empire and the rise of the Republic. M. Guizot obtained the permission of M. Thiers to convene a meeting where the limits of Church membership should be decided. In the *Temple du Saint Esprit* the Synod had to face the question: What is and what is not the Christian religion? Who are and who are not entitled to call themselves members of the Christian Church? The problem was faced with the highest ability, and with perfect honesty. M. Guizot said: "As for me, I am a Christian. I know What my symbol is. There are men sitting by my side who do not accept the Christian religion. They have a sincere belief in God. I have been careful not to deny that these men have a religion. Let them

form a Deistical Church: I shall be glad of it; but assuredly the difference is great between them and Christians." The question then was: Is Deism Christianity? Should all men who have a belief in God, and a pious feeling towards Him, be regarded as Christians, and be included in one common organisation? The Liberals neither disguised nor evaded the issue. Their champion said: "In my eyes a man is a Christian who, though a sinner, has a joyous confidence in God." He denied that any specifically Christian belief was necessary to the Christian religion, and laid down the limits of Church association which would make room for every religiously minded Deist. M. Bois, of Montauban, the leader of the Orthodox party, met him squarely by moving that the Synod adopt as its Confession "salvation by faith in

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who died for our offences, and rose again for our justification. It preserves and maintains as the basis of its teaching, its worship, and its discipline the great Christian facts that are expressed in its religious solemnities and its liturgies." The difference between his opponents' creed and his own, he described as a difference between two religions.

Some attempt was made on the part of the Liberals to show that they interpreted spiritually the Christian facts. The answer was given by M. Dhombres: "*Spiritualiser* ce n'est pas vaporiser. When a fact is explained in such a manner as to make it disappear, that process is no longer called the taking a spiritual view of it." Finally M. Bois summed up the issue before the vote: "The question which divides us is

this: Is there or is there not—Yes or No—a supernatural revelation of God? Has God created, loved, and saved us by His Son? If so, is this compatible with its contradictory? If Christianity is a supernatural revelation of God, it is not the supreme effort of the human reason. There are no shades or degrees here; the proposition is either wholly true or wholly false." On the whole discussion, M. Guizot, who had been present for more than sixty years at many parliamentary struggles in which the first orators of France were engaged, said he had never seen any argument which had a more elevated or a more dignified character, or which was more remarkable for form and substance. The Synod adopted the motion of M. Bois by a majority of sixty-one against forty-five. No one argues against the right of

philosophers to affirm that goodness is everything, that miracles are impossible, and that nothing in Jesus Christ has any importance except His moral teaching. But Christian believers in revelation are compelled to say that these philosophers are not Christians. If they refuse to do so, they are declaring that in their opinion these beliefs have no supreme importance. To say this is to incur the penalty of extinction. For Christianity dies when it passes altogether into the philosophic region. To believe in the Incarnation and the Resurrection is to put these facts into the foreground. Either they are first or they are nowhere. The man who thinks he can hold them and keep them in the background deceives himself. They are, and they ever must be, first of all. So, then, the battle turns on their truth or

falsehood. It does not turn on the inerrancy of the Gospel narrative. It does not turn even on the authorship of the Gospels. Faith is not a belief in a book, but a belief in a living Christ. If there is no living Christ to trust to, Christianity passes into mist and goes down the wind.

The Christian Church is entitled and bound to take part in the critical and historical study of the New Testament. It has the right, indeed, to disregard flippancy and frivolity. Such criticism as Huxley bestowed on what he was pleased to call "the Gadarene pig affair" may well be ignored. John Morley, in his piece on Voltaire, put the reason as well as it can be put. He says: "The best natures are most violently irritated and outraged by mocking and satiric attack upon the minor details, the accidents, the outside of the

objects of faith, when they would have been affected in a very different way by a contrast between the loftiest parts of their own belief and the loftiest parts of some other belief. Many persons who would listen to a grave attack on the consistency, reasonableness, and elevation of the currently ascribed attributes of the Godhead with something of the respect due to the profound solemnity of the subject, would turn with deaf and implacable resentment upon one who would make merry over the swine of Gadara." When Christians are asked to furnish a reply to every fresh assault on the Gospel history, they are entitled to say that if they can establish the great faiths of the historic creed, the critic who denies these, and justifies the denial on the grounds of criticism, must be in error. To establish

the sinlessness of Christ and His Resurrection is virtually to refute many critical arguments. Further, in dealing with analysis as applied to the Gospels, we are entitled to ask for the principles on which the so-called historical and literary criticism is carried on. For our part, we have the deepest conviction that until the principles of criticism are established by an induction based on the phenomena of literature generally, little that is solid or certain can be established. It is past dispute that English criticism is unable, as a rule, to assign, authorship to an anonymous contemporary book. It is unable, as a rule, to distinguish between the work of two collaborators. It is unable, in short, to perform any of these achievements which are believed possible when the Scriptures are handled. We are convinced, further, that the whole history of

English literature will show that English criticism was always just as powerless as it is now. There may be probabilities; but, as a rule, the likely explanation is not the true explanation. In other words, the answer to much sceptical criticism is to be found in showing, by a catena of instances, that criticism is attempting a task of which it is fundamentally incapable. Christians are also entitled to ask for more agreement between critics of the Gospel history than has yet been reached. In the face of the differences that divide the extreme critics, one may well doubt whether the problem of the composition of the Gospels is soluble. One may be perfectly certain that it has not been solved.

Again, Christians are entitled to insist upon knowing the presuppositions of their adversaries. To begin the study of the

origins of Christianity with a theory about the world and its management which from the first settles arbitrarily the most important questions involved, vitiates the whole process of reasoning. Like the mummers of old, sceptical critics send one before them with a broom to sweep the stage clear of everything for their drama. If we assume at the threshold of Gospel study that everything in the nature of miracle is impossible, then the specific questions are decided before the criticism begins to operate in earnest. The naturalistic critics approach the Christian records with an *a priori* theory, and impose it upon them, twisting the history into agreement with it, and cutting out what cannot be twisted. For example, the earlier naturalistic critics, Paulus, Eichhorn, and the rest, insisted on giving a non-miraculous interpretation,

Strauss perceived the unscientific character of this method, and set out with the mythical hypothesis. Baur set to work with a belief in the all-sufficiency of the Hegelian theory of development through antagonism. He saw tendency everywhere. As Bruce said of his method: "Anything additional, putting more contents into the person and teaching of Jesus than suits the initial stage of development, must be reckoned spurious. If we find Jesus in any of the Gospels claiming to be a superhuman being, such texts may with the utmost confidence be set aside as spurious. Such a thought could not possibly belong to the initial stage, but only to the final, when the human Messiah had developed into a deity, through the love and reverence of his followers." Abbott sets out with the foregone conclusion of the impossibility

of miracles. Matthew Arnold says: "Our popular religion at present conceives the birth, ministry, and death of Christ as altogether steeped in prodigy, brimful of miracle, *and miracles do not happen.*" Schmiedel starts with the hypothesis of tendencies, and discovers them. He sees Paulinism and Ebionitism in Luke, and opposing tendencies in Matthew (universalism and particularism). Moffatt, who does not clearly define his attitude towards the Incarnation and Resurrection, regards Matthew xxviii. 16–20 as a later appendix on the *a priori* ground that the following cannot be primitive: (1) Universal mission, (2) The baptismal formula, (3) The Trinitarian formula. The subject might be illustrated indefinitely. In these cases the difference is upon first principles. Those who take the ground that miracles cannot happen,

need not examine the Gospels in order to reject Christianity, for certainly it is the supernatural character of Christianity that constitutes its differentia, its true and necessary essence.

These men start the study of the Gospel history with the assumption that God cannot visit and redeem His people. His arm is chained that it cannot save. It is not uncharitable or untrue to say that behind this there is often the belief that man needs no redemption, but can save himself. Sin does not need an atonement, remorse is an impure and morbid passion; a divine intervention for man's recovery is as unnecessary as it is inconceivable. The sense of sin and guilt is absent. The argument for historical Christianity is based upon the fact—a fact attested by the whole history of humanity—that there was need that Christ should come.

I

Christ and the Newer Criticism[1]

IN his address from the Chair of the Congregational Union, delivered more than thirty years ago, Dr. Dale declared that the controversies on theology had narrowed to one vital question. "If only a theory of

[1] (1) *The Encyclopædia Biblica*, Vol. II., edited by T. K. Cheyne, D.D., and J. S. Black, LL.D. (A. and C. Black); (2) *The Historical New Testament*, by James Moffatt, B.D. (T. and T. Clark); (3) *The Saviour in the Newer Light*, by Alexander Robinson, B.D. (Blackwood, 1895); (4) *The Expositor*, April, 1901, Art. II., "Few Things Needful," by T. K. Cheyne, D.D. (Hodder and Stoughton); (5) *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*, by R. W. Dale, LL.D. (Hodder and Stoughton).

inspiration were breaking down, if men were discussing nothing more serious than the precise and minute accuracy of the four Gospels, if we were threatened with nothing more formidable than the demonstration of the historical untrustworthiness of a few chapters here and there in the Old Testament, we might look on calmly and wait for the issue of the conflict with indifference. But it becomes plainer every year that the real questions in debate are far different from these. The storm has moved round the whole horizon, but it is rapidly concentrating its strength and fury above one Sacred Head. This then is the real issue of the fight—Is Christendom to believe in Christ any longer or no? It is a battle in which everything is to be lost or won. It is not a theory of ecclesiastical policy which is in danger, it is not a theological system, it is not a creed,

it is not the Old Testament or the New, but the claim of Christ himself to be the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind," Dr. Dale's words might be used without the change of a letter to describe the situation which is now created. For many years the Church of Christ in this country, and particularly in Scotland, has been agitated by disputes over the Old Testament. They are not over, but the end is in sight. Now the New Testament is once more thrown into the furnace, and with it the Christian religion itself. It was inevitable. We never shared the belief of some amongst our friends in the weight to be attached to the conclusions of Harnack. It seemed tolerably plain that Harnack's words meant less than they were made to mean, and also that his position was unstable. Now we have in the new volume of the *Encyclopædia*

Biblica, a thorough-going criticism applied to the New Testament, and in *The Historical New Testament* of Mr. Moffatt there issues from the bosom of an orthodox Church a new claim on the part of advanced criticism for room and verge. It is of no avail to lift up hands in horror. The critics have to be met. If they are not frankly encountered the door of faith will be closed on multitudes. In one sense we take up the discussion with great satisfaction. Now, at last, the very life of the faith has to be fought for, and, as Dr. Dale says: "This is surely enough to stir the Church to vehement enthusiasm and to inspire it with its old heroic energy. It is a controversy not for theologians merely, but for every man who has seen the face of Christ and can bear personal testimony to His power and glory." As Jesus is the Lord and Head

of the Church, so He is its Impregnable Rock. But we confess that for personal reasons we have been reluctant to take the field. With two of the writers concerned —Dr. Cheyne and Dr. Bruce—we have had in past days somewhat intimate association, and both the living and the dead have laid the Church of Christ under heavy obligations by their patient toil, their noble, truth-loving spirit, and the light they have cast on many parts of Holy Scripture. We are glad to think that the personal side of the question does not bulk largely, and that it will be unnecessary to burden the discussion with many references to individual writers. Very little that is really new has been said. The old assumptions have been made, and the old results have been reached. Those who have studied Strauss and Baur and Renan, and the literature gathering

round these names, will find themselves surprised at very few points. Further, we emphatically desire to disclaim attributing what seem the logical inferences from their statements to scholars who have not accepted these inferences, and who may think that the said inferences are not inevitable. In one point, however, we venture to blame them. They know the history of their criticism, what has been its result in the case of their forerunners. They ought, as we humbly think, to have shown how they could conserve the faith after surrendering what they have surrendered. Instances might be multiplied, but we content ourselves with the case of Strauss, who, though not the most agile nor the most learned of the anti-supernaturalists, was by far the ablest, the strongest, the most masterly. When Strauss

wrote his first Life of Jesus, he argued that the Gospels were mythical, but seriously and honestly tried to save their ethical spirit, and believed he had succeeded. He was in orders, a preacher of the Gospel, who fully meant to continue in that work. So far from thinking that he had undermined the Christian faith, he believed that he had strengthened it by putting it in a form in which Hegel could approve of it.[1] He was cut to the quick when theologians cast him out, and regarded him as an arch-enemy of the Christian name. The theologians were right in saying that his was not the Christianity of Christ, nor of Paul, nor of the Catholic Church. So it

[1] Strauss studied under Baur at Blaubeuren and Tübingen, and Baur was an ardent Hegelian. His criticism was simply a thorough-going application of Hegelianism to New Testament history.

was from the first, and what Straussism came to we know, and shall have occasion in these articles to describe. Further, we believe that Straussism, in its latest development, would be the inevitable successor to Christianity, if Christianity could be displaced. It is a large *if*. But to say that Strauss, when he wrote his first book, saw all that was to come of it, would be unjust in the highest degree. The history of theological controversy ought to have taught us by this time that opponents must be treated not only justly, but mildly; and that their adherence to Christianity, even if illogical, should be viewed with gladness and with hope. We must refrain from minute points of criticism and content ourselves with giving our readers as best we may an understanding of the points on which the battle must turn.

Dr. Cheyne's career has been one of the most remarkable on record, but few of his students in the Old Testament could have imagined that he would have attacked with such vigour in his later period the problems of the New Testament. A mind so eager, so acute, so versatile, and so laborious as his must perhaps have felt it a positive necessity to apply to the New Testament the methods he followed in the Old. In this country there has been no Encyclopædia like the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. No editor of an Encyclopædia in this country has taken quite the same view of his duties as has Dr. Cheyne. Even Robertson Smith, who could be masterly enough, left much of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* to be done by contributors who were left to their own discretion. But in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* the editor's hand is seen every-

where except in the extraordinary articles of Dr. Armitage Robinson, which remain an unsolved mystery. Dr. Cheyne acts as he thinks the editors of the Old Testament acted, and has a hand in many contributions which he did not write. He has what to our mind is a most objectionable way of mixing up the work of one author with another. For example, he takes Robertson Smith's fine article on Hebrews in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and cuts it up with pieces from von Soden. But if Dr. Cheyne will tell us what reason he has to believe that Robertson Smith changed his views on the subject, we will tell him why we believe he did not change them. Any way, the practice is indefensible. If Robertson Smith was not good enough, let von Soden be substituted but the mingling of the two serves no

purpose save to irritate and to confuse. Dr. Cheyne's method compels us to attach the most serious importance to the treatment of Jesus in this new volume, and he will no doubt accept the full responsibility of the most negative conclusions given in his book. Dr. Schmiedel, who writes upon "Gospels," confesses that his criticism "may have sometimes seemed to raise a doubt whether any credible elements were to be found in the Gospels at all." To make out that Jesus existed, he resorts to a few statements, such as the fact that the relations of Jesus thought Him mad. But in Dr. Schmiedel's view the main fabric of the Gospels is utterly incredible.[1] The

[1] §§ 139–140]. Only nine "absolute credible passages": (1) Mark x. 17 f.: "Why callest thou me good? none is good save God only." (2) Matt. xii. 31 f: that blasphemy against the son of man can be forgiven. (3) Mark iii. 21:

stories of miracle are contemptuously rejected, and of course for the Resurrection and the Ascension there is no room at all. In fact, it would not be too much to say that there is a deliberate attempt in this book

that his relations held him to be beside himself. (4) Mark xiii. 32: "Of that day and of that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son but the Father." (5) Mark xv. 34 = Matt. xxvii. 46: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (6) Mark viii. 12: "There shall no sign be given unto this generation"—a refusal to work miracles. (7) Mark vi. 5 f.: Jesus was able to do no mighty work (save healing a few sick folk) in Nazareth and marvelled at the unbelief of its people. (8) Mark viii. 14–21: "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of Herod"—an evidence, according to Schmiedel, that "the feeding of the 5000 and the 4000 was not an historical occurrence, but a parable." (9) Matt. xi. 5 = Luke vii. 22: the answer to the Baptist, where Schmiedel argues that the final clause "counteracts the preceding enumeration," and proves that "Jesus was speaking not of the physically, but of the spiritually blind, lame, leprous, deaf, dead."

to obliterate Christ. The existence of Christ as a man is admitted rather than affirmed, but that he was God is distinctly denied.[1] In the article on Faith[2] there is no reference that we can trace to the meaning of faith as the Church understands it, faith in the risen Lord. Dr. Cheyne, writing on John the Baptist, calls him Johanan, and quaintly informs us that "primitive tradition rightly accentuates the inferiority of Johanan to Jesus"! Judas is another of Dr. Cheyne's subjects, and he argues that the story is unhistorical. Of Dr. Abbott's contribution we say nothing, for his arguments and his attempts at construction are alike familiar,

[1] § 139]. "In the person of Jesus we have to do with a completely human being, and the divine is to be sought in him only in the form in which it is capable of being found in a man."

[2] By Dr. Cheyne. No notice is taken in the article of the Pauline idea of Faith.

and of Dr. Bruce's article we shall speak immediately. But it must be pointed out that these derive their main importance from the fact that they are published and endorsed by a dignitary of the Church of England, who has the co-operation of orthodox scholars in all the Churches. Dr. Cheyne must himself feel his position to be very difficult. Dr. Colenso, whom in many ways Dr. Cheyne strongly recalls, published a hymn-book in 1866 which did not contain the name Jesus or Christ from one end to the other. When challenged on the subject, the Bishop replied, no doubt in perfect good faith, that this was quite unintentional on his part. He had rejected hymn after hymn which contained prayers to Christ which he objected to on Scriptural and apostolical grounds. And yet Dr. Colenso used the

English liturgy, which is full of prayers to Christ: "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy peace," "Christ have mercy upon us," "God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us miserable sinners." The question of subscription is very difficult, and we are far from wishing to press it, but to use in Christian worship for the purposes of the common devotional life prayers which employ a doctrine which the offerer of the prayer disclaims elsewhere as unsound, is to turn worship into a mockery. We are glad to point out that in the interesting apologia which Dr. Cheyne published in the *Expositor*, he says that Jesus knew Himself to be the Saviour of men. "The centre of gravity in theology can never be shifted from the person of Christ. The Jesus

Whom we call Master is at once the historical Jesus of Nazareth, and that ideal form which becomes more and more glorious as man's mortal capacity increases —the Jesus whom we can imagine moving about our streets comforting those who mourn, healing the morally sick, stirring the consciences of the sluggish, and giving to all who see and hear, fresh disclosures of truth, fresh glimpses of the ideal. Without the historical Christ the ideal Christ could never have beamed upon us."

It is with the utmost hesitation that we speak of the article on Jesus by the late Dr. A. B. Bruce. The distinguished author is no longer with us. If he had been living one might have spoken freely, for he was always ready to meet any criticism. It may be that he was precluded from

referring to subjects dealt with elsewhere, and restricted to write on the life and teaching of Jesus. It is open to any one to say that a believer in the Deity and Resurrection of the Son of God should not have consented to write under restrictions which virtually involved a suppression of his faith. But on this point we pass no judgment. It may be that he wrote his article in one of the times when he suffered from a temporary eclipse, for certainly he had experience of the ups and downs in the fight of faith. But if the article had been unsigned there would have been little difficulty in concluding that the author had abandoned the supernatural element in the life of Jesus. Canon Cheyne himself writes that the historical student must confess "that the name of the father of Jesus is, to say the least, extremely

uncertain"[1]—that is, there is no doubt that Jesus was born of an earthly father, but it is very questionable whether that father's name was Joseph. Dr. Bruce says of the story of the Passion, that, "even in its most historic version, it is not pure truth, but truth mixed with doubtful legend."[2] As to the Resurrection, he thinks that the followers of Jesus believed that He rose again, but he evidently implies his own disbelief.[3] As to miracles, Christ may have worked some remarkable cures, but "the miraculousness of the healing ministry is not the point in question."[4] Those who followed Dr. Bruce's career must have marked with deep regret his gradual descent to naturalism. As long ago as 1863, he

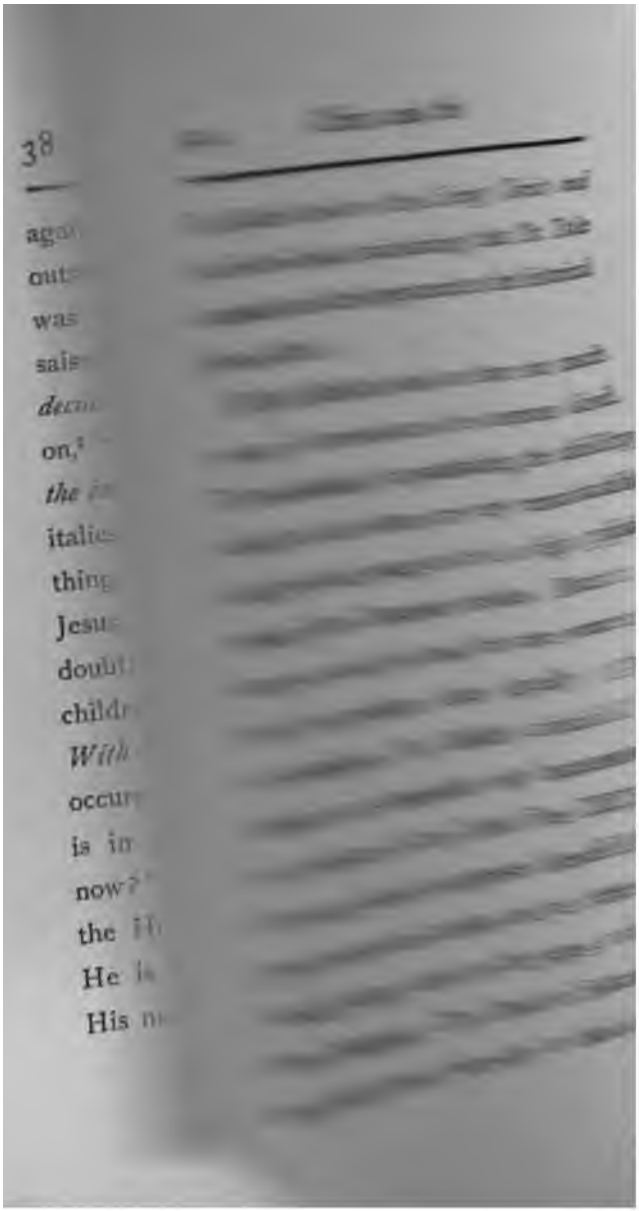
[1] Art. *Joseph* [*in N.T.*], § 7.
[2] Art. *Jesus*, § 30.
[3] § 32. [4] § 19.

edited a translation of Ebrard's *Gospel History*, a book which, as many of our readers know, is strenuously orthodox and interesting to this day for its boldness and ingenuity, though somewhat marred by a spirit of scorn and defiance. In his *Training of the Twelve* and his *Humiliation of Christ* he made noble contributions to Christology, but he moved gradually away from the early standpoint. Even in 1886, when he published his work on the *Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, he showed himself curiously uncertain and inconsistent. He staked everything on the sinlessness of Christ. There was, according to him, but one miracle vitally important to faith, and that was the moral miracle of the sinlessness of the Redeemer. And yet he faltered in the assertion of that great fact. When vindicating Christ from charges

against His character, he said:[1] "The most outstanding charge brought against Christ was excessive severity in exposing Pharisaism, *but that was a fault which very decidedly leant to virtue's side.*" He went on,[2] "*If not a perfect sun, He* [Christ] *was the best sun yet vouchsafed to mortals.*" (The italics, of course, are ours.) That is, everything is made to turn on the sinlessness of Jesus, and in the end that sinlessness is left doubtful. Further, in the catechism for children which he appended to his book, *With Open Face*, the one reference that occurs to the Resurrection and the after life is in the last question: "Where is Jesus now?" to which the answer is: "He is in the House of His Father in heaven, where He is preparing a place for all who bear His name and walk in His footsteps." Not

[1] P. 321. [2] P. 328.

one word is said about the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead; in fact, so far as words go, Dr. Bruce's position is identical with that of Mr. Robinson in his book, *The Saviour in the Newer Light*, when he says that Jesus "went like all other human spirits that have for this present world died, into regions yet hidden from us, which He in His prophetic insight had looked forward to as other mansions of the Father. That in those mansions His Spirit rose again into active life is the fact on which we must lay hold. How this happened we cannot tell." Yet it would be gravely unjust to assume that Dr. Bruce, who occupied his position as a professor in the Free Church to the last, fully states his belief either in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* or in the other books to which we have made reference. And it ought to be recalled that he criticised



Mr. Robinson, the author of *The Saviour in the Newer Light*, a frank, winning, and courageous book, though much below Mr. Moffatt's in the matter of scholarship. The Free Church had to face the long and hard battle of Old Testament criticism; and now at last in Dr. George Adam Smith's *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, has received an honest attempt at construction, at making the new views of the Old Testament not only compatible with preaching, but contributory to the power of preaching. This may be said without accepting some of Dr. Smith's conclusions. We trust that there will be a spirit of wise forbearance in facing the New Testament problem as presented to a credal Church by Mr. Moffatt, whose great gifts and accomplishments are not to be lightly esteemed.

We shall now attempt to state as clearly as possible the issues involved for faith in the new criticism thus imperfectly sketched.

II

The Modes of Access to Christ

THE Church has thought itself able to approach the Lord Jesus Christ in two ways.

(1) Believers have imagined that they had through the Gospels direct access to the historical Christ. In these histories they have read with love and hope and awe of His sayings, of His mighty works, of His dying, of His rising again the Conqueror of Death, of His ascending to the right hand of God. They have put together the accounts of His doing and dying, His Action and His Passion, and their hearts have burned within them. Does the newer

criticism close for us this door of access? Of course the franker criticism of recent generations closes it almost completely, dissolves it into myth and legend, leaves us with a few uncertain fragments. And this is the method, so far as we can understand it, of Schmiedel and Cheyne. All that remains as historical fact about the life of Jesus, all that we can be sure of in His words, is a very small residuum, while the Gospels as a whole are so untrustworthy that read without guidance they can do little but mislead. Mr. Moffatt is much subtler in his methods, but we doubt if the result is so very different. The question his discussion raises is whether we are at any given point in the Gospel history in true communication with Jesus.[1]

[1] *Hist. N.T.*, pp. 11, 45, n. 2: "To realise that the central materials of the gospels were

Others have given us the story as it stands, and they have transfigured it and expanded it, and even transformed it, till no one knows what belonged to the original Christ. They have put into the lips of Christ what their experience of Him had put into

mainly drawn up and collected during the three or four decades which followed the death of Jesus, and that the gospels themselves were not composed until the period 65–105; to realise these facts will show—(i.) that the gospels are not purely objective records, no mere chronicles of pure crude fact, or of speeches preserved verbatim; (ii.) that they were compiled in and for an age when the church required Christ not as a memory so much as a religious standard, and when it reverenced him as an authority for its ideas and usages; (iii.) that they reflect current interests and feelings, and are shaped by the experience and for the circumstances of the church; (iv.) that their conceptions of Christ and Christianity are also moulded to some extent by the activity and expansion of the church between 30 and 60, by its tradition, oral and written, and by its teaching, especially that of Paul."

their hearts, so that at best we have indirect reflections of the mind of Christ. A "Church" character is ascribed to what have been supposed the most precious words of Jesus. In this way Christ is merged in the Church. The Church is merged in Christianity, and Christianity in turn disappears in the higher life of humanity. It is obvious that if this is admitted the conception of a personal relation and a personal debt to the Lord Jesus Christ, in which the essence of Christianity has been supposed to lie, becomes practically impossible. We do not know enough of Christ historically. Our ignorance of His life is too complete for any possible relation to Him, or a profound and passionate sense of gratitude and devotion. It is our personal debt to Christ dying in our stead, the Just for the unjust, the Substitute

for His guilty people, that is mainly emphasised in the Epistles. But in the heavy haze that hangs over the Gospels, the uncertainty as to their original content, this feeling must die of starvation. Among writers of the rationalistic school in general we find a deep uncertainty as to the Resurrection of Jesus. And yet it is very much on this point that the discussion turns. Some will tell us that Christ lives and reigns, but when they are closely questioned it turns out that they mean only that He is with the spirits of the blessed, and takes the highest place among them. So, though His personality is not extinct, it belongs to history. It does not belong to life in any other sense than another historical personality. If this is so, Christianity is annihilated at a stroke, for Jesus disappears from it. Indeed, on these

principles our Lord has no place in the Gospel at all. Even Harnack—we translate from *Das Wesen des Christenthums*—in his chapter on Christology, says: "*It is no paradox, and neither is it rationalism, but the simple expression of the actual position as it lies before us in the Gospels: not the Son but the Father alone, has a place in the Gospel as Jesus proclaimed it.*" We print this very significant passage in italics, for it cannot be too earnestly pondered. Harnack asserts that Jesus has no place in the Gospel, and what he gives us is not the Christianity of Christ, of which we have heard so much wearisome nonsense lately, but Christianity without Christ. On the naturalistic constructions of the Gospel the figure of Christ more and more tends to disappear, and He is allowed to pass as one whose historical function has

been fulfilled. Dr. Bruce, in his more orthodox days, had something to say of what he called "sentimental naturalism,"[1] that is, the attempt of those who rejected miracle and the supernatural, who denied the deity of the Son of God, to wrap up their denial in sentimental phrases. He mentioned as members of this school such men as Ewald, Weizsäcker, and Keim. We remember very well being greatly perplexed in our youth by Ewald's treatment of the Resurrection of Christ. It did not seem easy to say whether Ewald believed in the miracle of the corporeal resurrection, or whether he was covering up a denial in beautiful phrases. Dr. Bruce had no hesitation in giving his opinion. He said that according to Ewald "the resurrection did not, could not take place, but the

[1] *Humiliation of Christ*, p. 210.

beautiful dream must be dealt with tenderly, and its reality denied with as much sentiment as if you meant to affirm it." Strauss was very clear on this subject, as on most others which he took up. He said in reference to Ewald's chapter that "his long, inflated rhetoric contained literally no fragment of an idea beyond what had been said by himself in the first Life of Jesus much more clearly, 'though assuredly with far less unction.'"[1] Baur did not discuss the problem at all, but regarded it, as we shall see later on, as insoluble. Strauss himself was in no doubt of its vital importance. He said: "The precepts of Jesus would have been blown away and scattered like leaves by the wind had those leaves not been fastened as with a strong, tangible binding, by a belief in His Resurrection."

[1] *Humiliation of Christ*, p. 211.

Of course Strauss did not believe in the miracle of the Resurrection, but he had the eyes to see that without it Christianity was maimed beyond hope of survival. When we deal with the problem of Christ, and especially in dealing with Christian teachers, it seems to us that we are entitled to expect perfect candour on this question, no quibbling with phrases, no talk about the resurrection of the spirit, as if the spirit were ever buried, but a plain declaration as to whether or not the writer holds the ancient faith of the Church. Naturalism has much to say against the reality of the crowning miracle: faith has much to say for her Author and Finisher. But there is nothing to be said for those who attempt to evade the problem, to shirk the issue, to confuse their readers as to their own position.

(2) Another door has been thought open to the faithful.[1] It has ever been believed in the Church of the Redeemer that there is direct access to Christ for every Christian through the power of the Holy Spirit, that they know Him as those could not know Him whose knowledge was after the flesh. The Church, though it is based on a history, is not content with any history, however sacred and pathetic and inspiring. The Church is not content even with the story of our Lord's earthly life and ministry. Rather it begins anew where this ended. St. Paul delivered *first of all* that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He rose again the third day and began that life the present energies of which are the life of the world to-day. Though we have known Christ after the

[1] John xiv. 26, xv. 26, xvi. 13–14.

flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him so no more.[1] This does not mean that the New Testament history is antiquated.[2] It does not mean that the record of the days of the Redeemer's flesh has lost its power. Rather it means that the story retains its power because it is the beginning of a story which shall have no end, because we have now for the old miracles of power and mercy the new miracles of grace that the Holy Ghost is working round us wherever Christ is lifted up. Christ, by virtue of His Death and Resurrection and Ascension to the right hand of God, is accessible to His people whenever they call upon His name.

[1] 2 Cor. v. 16.

[2] Bruce, *St. Paul's Conc. of Christianity*, p. 256: "To cast a slight on the words and acts spoken and done in that ministry, and on the revelation of a character made thereby, was not, I imagine, in all his thoughts."

The anguish of bereavement, the profound stirring of the emotions when we think of the life into which has already passed so much that was very part of our own being, lies in the fact that we are parted, though it is but for a time. "Oh for the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still!" It is when men say this in their solitary musings that they wash the gates of death with their tears, and from its silence passionately implore a sign. "So passionately and so unavailingly! For there are times when faith is weak and the heart yearns for knowledge, when it seems to us as if all hopes and fears were bound up around the insupportable longing for one gleam, however brief, of certainty to shine through the darkness." The compensation is that we see and hear Jesus, that we can speak to Him and receive his reply, that

He will fill our weak and restless hearts, if we ask Him, with His own strength and peace. And so when we know Him in the new order. His earthly history is transfigured and shines before us in a new and glorious certainty. The witnesses are with us. It was at a time when learned men regarded the testimony of the Gospel as wholly discredited that the evangelical revival broke forth, and new witnesses to the Gospel story rose up and declared it to the world.[1] They knew Christ for themselves,

[1] In the advertisement prefixed to the 1st edition of the *Analogy*, May, 1736, Butler wrote: "It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is now, at length, discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it, as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained, but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule,

they preached Him in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and as they went forth in soul-seeking love, filled with a passion for Christ, the signs of His presence and activity in the spiritual order put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. "I knew," said Tholuck, speaking of his youth, "an old man strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. From that time I knew what the true Being and Becoming for man was, and also that whosoever knew it would have the power of efficacious action."

(3) It is not possible to separate the two modes of access. The roads to Christ run parallel, and sometimes they seem to be, as it were, one way. Dr. Dale, in his

as it were by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world." Then came Whitefield and the Wesleys.

remarkable book, *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*, perhaps used some incautious expressions as to our independence of the Gospel history, but his argument was essentially sound. What he said was briefly this: The vast mass of Christians are unable to follow the argument of scholars about early Christian history. They cannot search through Justin Martyr and Irenæus and the rest. Nevertheless, their faith is not shaken by the varied assaults on the Christ of history because they know Christ by faith. They know that they have been delivered from this present evil world and translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. Knowing this, they do not become independent of the Gospel history. They do not set it aside. They do not say that inquiry as to its source and meaning is impiety. At the same

time they feel themselves under no call to take part in the battle, for they know past all doubting what is enough for them. They know the actual presence and activity of Christ in their own lives, and knowing this, they know that when criticism has said its last word it will be found that the Gospels have preserved the substance of the earthly history of Christ, and that they have given a true account of it.

(4) Those who believe that the historical access to Christ is largely closed, and that the spiritual access is a mere dream, are not by any means always willing to discard Christ, and to say that He is nothing in their lives. Nor have we the slightest disposition to drive them into utter unbelief. We had rather take their admissions and seek to lead them forward, to show them that if they believe as much as they do,

they must believe more. Those who think that we know very little that we can be sure of about the earthly life of Christ, who reject the story of His miraculous work, who believe that His body crumbled into dust beneath the Syrian skies, who even hesitate to say that He was altogether free from sin, are often eager to believe that He is a glorified spirit, whose pure image shines with an undying lustre upon the world. They grant, indeed, that this image is largely the creation of the human mind and heart, that it cannot be verified, that it is not even real, and yet they entertain for it a true affection and reverence. They think that the same lessons can be learned from it whether it is real or whether it is ideal. Even though they think not that Christ created the Church, but that the Church created Christ, they are loth to

believe that they have lost Christ. Why, they ask, should not Christ be the centre for the religious emotions of mankind, though He be merely a creation of the thought and conscience of the race? The strongest expression of this feeling that we can call to mind occurs in the late Mr. Sime's life of Lessing. "Admit," he says, "that the real was very different from the mythical Jesus, that when the last stroke came He fell like other men into a sleep from which there is no awakening, the legend of his love does not on that account lose its charm or its power to win men from a degrading materialism. It is ideally true, whether historically true or not, and is the best witness to the essential goodness of the race that has evolved it."[1] We

[1] Cf. T. H. Green's position: "More, probably, than two generations after St. Paul had gone to

are far from treating such expressions with impatience or contempt, but such writers are as much bound to answer men like Strauss and Renan as we are. They have to show, as we have to show against both, that Christ was essentially a noble character. Strauss became frank enough when he told us that Jesus, as the religious leader, must come to be daily more and more estranged from mankind, as the latter has developed under the influence of the civilising powers of modern times.[1] And again he said that

his rest, there arose a disciple . . . who gave that final spiritual interpretation to the person of Christ, which has for ever taken it out of the region of history and of the doubts that surround all past events, to fix it in the purified conscience as the immanent God" (*Works*, III., p. 242).

[1] *Das. Leb. Jes.*, § 149 (II. S. 701): "Ja, wenn wir es uns gestehen wollen, so ist dem gebildeten Theil der Zeitgenossen dasjenige, was den altgläubigen Christen heilige Geschichte war, nur

if men would open their eyes and were honest enough to avow what they saw, they would have to acknowledge that the entire activity and aspiration of the higher modern life was based upon views which run directly counter to the mind of Christ. And what are we to say of Renan's picture of Christ's [1] later life as a misery and a lie and of his request that we should bow before this sinner and His superior Sakya-

noch Fabel." S. 703: "Doch nicht allein der Glaube, sondern auch die Wissenschaft in ihrer neuesten Entwicklung hat diesen Standpunkt unzureichend befunden."

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, V. ad fin.: "To conceive the good is not sufficient; it must be made to succeed. To accomplish this, less pure paths must be followed, etc." XXII.: "Not by any fault of his own his conscience lost somewhat of its original purity. His mission overwhelmed him." XXIII.: "Did he regret his too lofty nature, and, victim of his greatness, mourn that he had not remained a simple artisan?"

Mouni as demi-gods? We hope to deal in succession with the various modes of access to Christ thus described, and to show that the faith of the Church is still built upon a rock, that we know the true Christ—in history and in heaven.

III

The Historical Christ:

PRELIMINARY ASSUMPTIONS

WE propose to deal in succession with (1) the Historical Christ; (2) the Risen and Exalted Christ; (3) the Ideal Christ. Then to sum up the result of the discussions. Before taking up the problem of history it is absolutely necessary to state the preliminary assumptions upon which the ultimate results of thought and research must in the last issue depend.

(1) There comes first the question of miracle. If it be assumed in advance that miracles are incredible, then it follows at

once that the Gospel history is, as a whole, incredible. Haeckel, among recent writers, is absolute in his judgment on this point. He does not need to study historical evidence. As a philosopher, he knows that Jesus could not have been born except in the natural way, and the testimony of the Gospels is accordingly to be rejected. The New Testament, at least in all of its parts that cannot be explained on a purely naturalistic basis, is discarded as useless for real history. This is simple enough. It was practically the view of the author of *Supernatural Religion*, a book which five-and-twenty years ago was thought by many to have destroyed Christianity. The author affirmed that all miracles were incredible, and therefore that no testimony could prove them. Somewhat inconsistently he devoted a considerable part of his book

to an attempt to prove that the historical evidence was baseless, putting the composition of the Gospels somewhere about 180 A.D. The world has not forgotten the terrible answer which these arguments met with from Bishop Lightfoot. Lightfoot expressed his surprise that the author should have thought it worth his while to go in for a kind of reasoning for which he had so small qualification, when he had already said plainly that even if the earliest asserted origin of the four Gospels could be established upon the most irrefragable grounds, the testimony of their writers would be utterly incompetent to prove the reality of the miraculous. John Morley burst into a very premature song of triumph over the discrediting of Christianity, and in doing so he used words which are still very much worth quoting. He said: "Is

Christianity a divine revelation supernaturally made, or is it not? We cannot evade the issue, as so many persons in the present religious anarchy attempt to do, by minimising the amount of supernatural element which we may choose to accept. If the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount was more than man, if He was in any sense whatever the bearer of a direct and special mission from the Supreme Being, if the ineffable attraction of His character had its secret in qualities conferred on Him by the Creator for the purposes of impressing men and leading them to loftier moral conceptions, then we are dealing with a supernatural transaction. Many of those who have ceased to accept the inspiration of the Scriptures, or the miracles contained in them, or the dogmas into which the Churches have hardened the words of Christ, still cling to

what is, after all, the great central miracle of the entire system, after which all others become easily credible—the mystery of the Incarnation of the Supreme. So, whatever reductions may be made in the amount, the quality of the whole belief seems to all intents and purposes credible." We are not sure that when these words were written Mr. Morley was aware of John Stuart Mill's statement, in his posthumous essay on "Theism," where he touches on the subject of the Christian revelation. Mill confessed that Christ was a historical person, and such an unique figure in history that "even now it would not be easy even for an unbeliever to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life." Nay more, that "it remains a possibility to the conception of

the rational sceptic that Christ actually was what He supposed Himself to be," not God, which, according to Mill, Christ never claimed to be, but "*a man charged with a special, express, and unique commission from God to lead mankind to truth and virtue.*" We put the last clause into italics. If our readers will carefully compare it with Mr. Morley's words they will be apt to think that the disciple in this case is explicitly refusing to follow his master. Miracle in any form to some is incredible, and with such persons it is useless to argue about the historicity of the Gospels.

But there are many who will not go so far as to reject in advance all conceivable witness and evidence of miracle. Still they approach every story of the kind with an intense suspicion, with an incredulity so strong that hardly any evidence

can overcome it. We have already referred to such writers as Ewald, who dislike miracle, but who, from very admiration of the character of Christ, are driven into language which men like Mr. Morley, the author of *Supernatural Religion*, Renan, and Strauss would say implies a miraculous element, or presses or expands the region of mystery and wonder into the realm of miracle. They do this because they perceive that the only alternative is the alternative adopted by Renan and Strauss, who declare that since the Gospel is not the life of God it was written by deliberate deceivers who have duped the Christian Church.

In his early book, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Robertson Smith, in answer to the objection that the supposed results of historical study were based on

the rationalistic assumption that the supernatural is impossible, and that everything in the Bible which asserts the existence of a real personal communication with God and man is unnecessarily untrue, replied very simply. He said that if in the application of his method his hearers found him calling in a rationalistic principle, if they could show that in any step of his argument he assumed the impossibility of the supernatural or rejected plain facts in the interests of rationalistic theories, he would frankly confess he was in the wrong.[1] He further declared that he was sure that the Bible did speak to the heart of man in words that could only come from God—that no historical research could deprive him of this conviction, or make less precious the Divine utterances that spoke straight to the heart,

[1] *O.T. in Jew. Ch.*, pp. 27 sq.

for the language of these words was so clear that no readjustment of their historical setting could conceivably change the substance of them. In his book on the *Prophets of Israel* he again took up the question of the supernatural, finding it historical first in the intrinsic character of the scheme of revelation as a whole. He went on: "If the religion of Israel and Christ answers these tests, the miraculous circumstances of its promulgation need not be used as the first proof of its truth, but must rather be regarded as the inseparable accompaniment of a revelation which bears the historical stamp of reality."[1] The position expressed in the sentence last quoted is that from which we approach the Gospel history.[2] So far from believing that miracles

[1] P. 16 (new edition).

[2] "That Christ should have worked miracles

cannot be proved from any testimony, so far from believing that in every case they are to be regarded with suspicion, we maintain that in the case of a Divine revelation miracles are appropriate and fitting. This has been the general feeling of the Church, and has been expressed by her best apologists.[1] They have taken miracle as the fit accompaniment of a religion that moves and

does not surprise me. It would have surprised me if He had not" (Dale, *Living Christ and Gospels*, p. 102).

[1] Bushnell, *Nat. and the Supern.*, p. 176: "When we discover the world, or human race, groaning under the penal disorders and bondage of sin, the deliverance of those disorders by a supernatural power involves no overturning of the causes at work, or the laws by which they work, but only that these causes are, by their laws, submitted to the will and supernatural action of God, so that He can arrange new conjunctions, and accomplish, in that manner, results of deliverance."

satisfies the souls of men, and that asserts itself to be derived directly from God. It is the assurance to its first teachers that they have not been led by their own dreams, but have been taught by the Lord of Nature. That is, miracle is part of the accompaniment as well as part of the content of a true revelation, its appropriate countersign. Of course those who take this ground do not deny, but rather firmly assert, the steadfast and glorious order of nature. It is against that august and austere order that miracles stand out. But they hold with equal firmness that God has made man for Himself, and that if He has sent His Son to die for them the physical order cannot set the rule for the way of grace. If God has relented, nature may relent. They believe that if there is a personal God miracles are possible, and revelation, which

is miracle, is also possible. They hold that if we can know God we may be able to know His revelation as that which could never have risen in the human mind and heart, though both rise up to meet it, and hold it, and never let it go. "Thou hast the words of eternal life." They are not dismayed when they are told that the Gospel age was the age when legendary stories and superstitions and miraculous pretensions of the most fanciful and grotesque kind abounded. Nay, rather their faith is firmer, for they take these stories and compare them with the Gospel miracles, and they say, How is it that the stories of the New Testament are lofty and tender and beautiful and significant, while the rest are monstrosities? As one able writer has said, the Jewish tales about the casting out of devils are in themselves a most marvellous

contrast to the Gospel miracles.[1] They recognise that belief cannot be forced. It is always possible to doubt historical evidence. It is always possible to say that there may be some way out if we only knew it. But to those who believe in Christ and ponder His character, His teaching, the way of His coming to us and going from us, there is a setting for the stories in which they will live safely enough. Further, a revelation can never be anything to sinful dying men if it is not the record of Divine actions as well as Divine thoughts. So we cordially agree with Mr. Morley that, granting the entrance of the Son of God into human history, granting the miracle of the In-

[1] Cf. story in Bk. of Tobit (vi.–viii.) of expulsion of demon by smoke from the burning heart and liver of fish caught in the Tigris. Cf. Apocryphal story of expulsion of Satan in the form of a mad dog from Judas by the Child Jesus (*I. Infancy*).

carnation of the Supreme, there is little to cause any difficulty. Without the Incarnation, without the Resurrection, we have no form of religion left to us that will control or serve or comfort mankind. It is the fact of our Lord's deity that gives its meaning to His every action and His every deed.

(2) In a book like this we cannot go very particularly into minute criticisms. All that can be attempted is to set forth the broad arguments clearly. No one who takes up Schmiedel or Mr. Moffatt will read very far without asking himself, But how does the critic know this? Upon what principle are certain passages rejected, certain narratives denied, certain conclusions drawn as to authorship? If he finds it laid down that those reported words of Jesus are accurate which could not have proceeded from the unaided imagination of His

disciples, he may be inclined to ask, Who is to say what could or could not have proceeded from the imagination of the writers of the Gospels? He will, in fact, soon come to the conclusion that there are very few real principles in criticism, principles that can be depended upon. Mr. Moffatt, to do him justice, is haunted by a consciousness of this, and the part of his book which has most interested us is the notes in which every now and then he recognises the necessity of some principles to be followed in fixing dates, and settling questions of authorship, and in dealing with the historical foundations of narrative. We have no space to follow him into details, but we are tolerably sure that Mr. Moffatt, on consideration, will see that Canon Gore[1]

[1] *Lux Mundi*, pp. xvii. sq., xxix. sq., 240 sq., 258 sq.

and Dr. Driver[1] were right when they said that the Old Testament was produced under very different historical conditions from the New, and that the two cannot be dealt with in the same way. Mr. Moffatt has not been able, through the limits of space, to let us know exactly how much he will allow us still to believe of the New Testament. About the Book of Acts he is sufficiently frank. He says,[2] "As a historical document not merely for the period 75–100, but even for some points in the age of which it treats, Acts is a most serviceable and invaluable writing. For many parts of the apostolic age the author apparently possessed no resources and had access to few traditions. The result is that these parts are omitted, while in elaborating

[1] *Intro. to Lit. of O.T.*, pp. xvii. sq.
[2] *Hist. N.T.*, p. 419.

others he seems again to present a record at variance with the traits preserved in St. Paul's epistles. Yet even with the gaps, deviations, and contradictions of this history, it serves often as a useful outline for historical research, providing materials for the reconstruction of events and ideas which otherwise would remain even more dim than they now are." This is the function assigned to the book. The Gospel story is not completely gone over, but the miraculous birth of Jesus is definitely set aside, and we have found nothing to indicate a belief in the Resurrection and the Ascension. But Mr. Moffatt is often at variance not only with orthodox but even with rationalistic critics. He has no doubts and no fears as to his own capacity to instruct them, although he seems to have done his best to restrain the evident

contempt in which he holds all conservative critics. The point is, however, that the difference of opinion between free critics themselves shows the want of sound principles for literary and historical criticism. Till these are discovered—and they cannot be discovered from one literature—much is in the air. No doubt there is a certain unity of opinion amongst the rationalists, but this is largely due to the fact that from their dislike of miracle they are driven to find explanations, and that in the end one explanation approves itself as more probable or less desperate than the others. Mr. Moffatt speaks contemptuously of "amateur critics" who find great difficulty in following the conclusions of him and his school. We venture, however, to say with great respect that those who have studied the problems in English literature

will be the first to hesitate as to the legitimacy and validity of the methods adopted by many Biblical critics.

We do not say by any means that these methods are always uncertain. In the case, for example, of the analysis of the Hexateuch, no one who studies the question can be blind to the manner in which different lines of evidence converge. In English literature, we have the striking example of the analysis of the *Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Henry VIII.* In his early years, Tennyson dissected these plays, and his view of *Henry VIII.* was worked out in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, August, 1850, by James Spedding. The results were confirmed by that excellent Shakespearian scholar, Samuel Hickson; and they have been confirmed later in the publications of the New Shakespeare Society, although

we are not certain that the latest editors accept them. But Tennyson was of those who disputed the composite nature of the Iliad, and on such a question his opinion is of the greatest value. Students of English literature are familiar with the admirable labours of Professor G. C. Macaulay on Beaumont and Fletcher. His results, however, wait confirmation. One of the most controverted questions of English literary history is the authorship of letters published after the death of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and professing to be written by her. They were issued by the infamous Cleland, and there are apparently very strong proofs that they are forgeries. In fact, there is a diary in which Lady Mary chronicles all the letters she wrote during her travels, with the initials of those to whom they were addressed, and the

published letters contradict this diary in every particular. There are many other points against them to which we cannot refer. Nevertheless, it is now, we believe, the unanimous opinion of those best qualified to judge that they are genuine. The case was argued as well as it could be argued, and for New Testament critics is most instructive. In the forged Shelley letters it would have been very difficult to prove their spuriousness if it had not been that a passage was copied from an article by Sir Francis Palgrave in the *Quarterly Review*. After examining carefully the Logan-Bruce controversy, we have formed a decided opinion on the side of Logan, but very competent scholars still take the other view. In cases of contemporary authorship, it has been found that internal evidence is almost always indecisive. When

Charlotte Brontë published *Jane Eyre*, the general view was that the book was written by a man. Some thought it was written by a woman, and it was also suggested that a man and a woman had written it together. This last idea made Charlotte Brontë very merry. Similarly, when George Eliot's early books were published there was a like difference of opinion. The most extraordinary fact we know in connection with this subject is that when *Ecce Homo* was published, Dean Church thought it was written by Cardinal Newman. He wrote his magnificent essay on the book under this conviction. Perhaps no one understood Newman and all the secrets of his style and thought so well as Church; and yet he fell into this strange blunder. What has criticism been able to do in settling the authorship of *An Englishwoman's Love*

Letters, or in separating the work of Besant and Rice? It is only through narrow limits that the methods which critics have applied so confidently to the charter of the Christian Church can be scientifically used. In fact, there has been no formulation of scientific principles on this subject. The nearest approach we have seen is in the brilliant introduction which Professor Jebb contributes to his edition of *Theophrastus*. Yet even in this essay there is much that might be questioned by an appeal to the facts of literary history. It is scarcely too much to say that in such matters it is usually the unexpected that happens to be true.

Bishop Lightfoot, who is practically ignored by the new critics, but who surpassed them as much in knowledge as he did in judgment, expressed in memor-

able words his opinion of many German critics. He compared their work to that of the Rabbis of Jewish exegesis. The Rabbis were quite as able, quite as learned, but their work came to nought, even as the work of the many German critics, though minute and searching, failed because it was conceived in a false vein. It may be, said Lightfoot, that "the historical sense of seventeen or eighteen centuries is larger and truer than the critical insight of a section of men in our late half century."

IV

The Historical Christ:

ECCE HOMO; ECCE DEUS

FOR the fountain heads of Christianity the Church has supposed that we are to go direct to the four Gospels.[1] Before the historic Jesus Christ can be thoroughly realised His portrait is to be studied in these. Echoes deep and dear come to us from other sources, but we fail in justice to Him and to ourselves unless we turn to these. For it must be remembered that the argument concerning Jesus Christ

[1] Ἐν οἷς ἐγκαθέζεται ὁ Χριστός (Iren., *Adv. Hær.*, III. ii. 8).

cannot and must not be left to experts. Every one is called upon to judge: the materials are accessible to all. What the experts possess in addition to what the people possess is comparatively of small account. Experts may wait for the latest paper-covered book from Germany, the book of the future which so impressed the authoress of *Robert Elsmere*, which is going to make a complete end of historical Christianity. Nothing that the post or newspaper can ever bring us will touch the convictions which the earnest mind may arrive at from the study of the Lord's life in the Gospels. The trouble is that many will not look straight at Jesus Christ. They turn their heads away. Stopford Brooke very rightly points out that Burns, like so many other literary men, deliberately refused to look face to face at the Son of God. The active

scepticism of our day has largely gone along with a profound ignorance of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. We have been told that a company of working men, aliens from the Church, and in the majority of cases from faith, broke out into rapturous cheers after hearing a vivid presentation of the Christ Who wrought out in human life the creed of creeds. What is needed is that we should find out for ourselves in patient study the Christ of the Gospels, not the Christ of the *Institutes*, or of the Christ of the *Imitation*, or of the Christ of modern biographies. It should be understood that the utmost wealth of rhetoric employed even by believers to describe Christ serves only but to blanch the glowing colour of the original story. In order to penetrate the thoughts of men with the spirit of the life of Christ, we need the pre-

sentation of the matchless character so human in its sympathy and so divine in its purity.[1]

(1) First of all we appeal to the unbiassed readers of the Gospel to consider the wonderfulness and originality of the character of Christ. For testimony we shall appeal to men who, whether Christian or not, stood outside the Christian Church. Rousseau says: "The Gospel has marks of truth so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor of it would be more astonishing than the hero." He adds, "If the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God." John Stuart Mill, whose testimony on such

[1] Ἐμοὶ δὲ ἀρχεῖά ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, τὰ ἄθικτα ἀρχεῖα ὁ σταυρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ πίστις ἡ δι' αὐτοῦ (Ignat., *Ep. ad Phliadelph.*, VIII. § 2).

a matter carries the greatest weight, employs the argument from the originality of Christ's character to its historical truth. "Who among the disciples of Jesus, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing these sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul." He adds, it is "the God Incarnate, more than the God of the Jews or of nature, who, being idealised, has taken so great and salutary a hold on the modern mind." We shall not speak of the preparation in history for Christ's appearing—of how long the sky had whitened before His morning rose. We shall not speak of the long, silent magnificence of His beginning from the day when it first dawned on Him that He must be about the things of His Father

to His thirtieth year. We need not emphasise what will impress every reader —the marvellousness of the character described, its patience and its zeal, its sweetness and its strength, its tenderness and its sternness, its profound humility and its unparalleled self-assertion, its imperious demand for reverence and for trust.[1] There are two points, however, worth bearing in mind. Let it be observed that the evangelists have taken this wonderful character into the business of life. They have shown us how He demeaned Himself under all circumstances, whether blasphemed or adored,

[1] Matthew Arnold says: "Jesus himself, as he appears in the Gospels, and for the very reason that he is so manifestly above the heads of his reporters there, is, in the jargon of modern philosophy, an *absolute*; we cannot explain him, cannot get behind him and above him, cannot command him" (Pref. to Pop. Ed. of *Lit. and Dog.*).

whether triumphant or suffering, whether appealing or warning, whether working miracles or receiving cups of cold water. And they have not failed in rendering a true and verifiable image.[1] Further, they have given us the picture of a living personality. Now, as has been pointed out, these are two of the most difficult achievements of literature, which it may safely be said have never been compassed. Idealised characters as described in literature are very

[1] Cf. Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, § 120: "Methought I saw with great evidence, from the four Evangelists, the wonderful works of God, in giving Jesus Christ to save us, from his conception and birth, even to his second coming to judgment: methought I was as if I had seen him grow up; as from the cradle to the cross; to which also, when he came, I saw how gently he gave himself to be hanged, and nailed on it, for my sins and wicked doing. Also, as I was musing on this his progress, that dropped on my spirit, He was ordained for the slaughter."

vague. The words of Guinevere may be repeated:

> "But, friend, to me
> He is all fault who hath no fault at all;
> For who loves me must have a touch of earth:
> The low sun makes the colour."

George Eliot in her last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, suggests a parallel between her hero and the Redeemer approaching Israel, and tries to make him an ideal character, but, as has been said, he is as feeble and colourless a character as can be, and was well enough described by Mr. Hutton as a "moral mist." Nothing credible, nothing memorable, nothing clear is recorded of him. It is true, also, that the lives of the saints are hard to write, for they also are historically ineffective. The divine communion often weakens the personal and positive element in them, and the self is drowned,

and the personality whose assertion is required ere a man can be a force in history disappears. The exceptions to these are the books in which saints have written their own lives and experience. It is almost a law of literature that any portraits of the ideal in the least degree satisfactory are closely transcribed from life, as was, for example, Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*. This confirms what has been said. The wonderfulness, the originality of the character described in the Gospels, the minuteness, the freshness, the realisation, the detail of the whole portrait, prove that it is drawn from life.

(2) Next we must note in a word the strange harmony of the history. Modern critics have largely rejected the Fourth Gospel, and its historical value is lightly esteemed by such critics as we have recently

been referring to. But no sense of incongruity has disturbed believers, and in this matter the saints shall judge the critics. Or rather we ought to say the critics, who are men of letters, who know what literature is, and what life is, shall judge the narrow scholars. Of St. John's Gospel it may be said that it gives us not indeed the true Christ merely, for all the Gospels give us the true Christ, but that it gives us the fuller Christ. In that Gospel we find the same infinite mercy, love, and comprehension, the feminine element also in its finest strain —Godhead, manhood, womanhood united in the Redeemer and Reconciler. Now, when we are told by critics that these Gospels are composed of fragments that have floated together hitherto, nobody exactly knows how, that they are more legendary than historical, that they reflect the con-

sciousness of the time in which they were written, and not the actual truth about Jesus, we can only say that if this be so we are in presence of a stupendous miracle, a miracle which violates every law of literature as students of literature have understood it. On this point Principal Rainy's words cannot be too often quoted:

"The man who hides from himself what Christianity and the Christian revelation are takes the parts of it to pieces, and persuades himself that without divine interposition he can account for all the pieces. Here is something from the Jews and something from the Greeks. Here are miracles that may be partly odd natural events, partly nervous impressions, and partly gradually growing legends. Here are books, of which we may say that this element was contributed by this party, and

the other by that, and the general colouring by people who held partly of both. In such ways as these Christianity is taken down and spread over several centuries. But when your operation is done, the living whole draws itself together again, looks you in the face, refuses to be conceived in that manner, reclaims its scattered members from the other centuries to the first, and reasserts itself to be a great burst of coherent life and light, centring in Christ. Just so you might take to pieces a living tissue, and say there is here only so much nitrogen, carbon, lime, and so forth; but the energetic peculiarities of life going on before your eyes would refute you by the palpable presence of a mystery unaccounted for."

We will give two illustrations from literature sufficient to illustrate the argu-

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ment. One apologist, who is not only a Christian, but an eminent man of letters, takes the story of the Easter walk to Emmaus and points out how the writer rises to the level of perfect equality with the majestic conception of a risen God. He is so much at home with it that he fearlessly follows the minute actions of this exalted Being, and endows Him with sentence after sentence not unworthy of those Divine lips. He goes on to say that Shakespeare himself could not have moved on those lofty ranges of imaginative fiction without an occasional breakdown, and refers to the comparative failure of the language of the ghost in *Hamlet*. It falls, he says, on the whole, far short of the lofty and awful conception conveyed by the words of others who impart to us the impression which the dramatist wishes us to form.

Every one knows how in his introduction to the *Monastery* Sir Walter Scott dwells upon the almost certain breakdown of supernatural machinery in works of fiction. Another eminent writer mentions the fine Easter passage in *Faust*, where the disciples grieve that their Master is raised to heaven, and that they are left to suffer below. But in the Gospel the disciples suffer only from the news of Christ's death; and the apprehension that the story of His rising is too good to be true. When they know it to be true they are full of joy and triumph. And was it so that these lowly hands wove unaided a story whose unity and magnificence have dazzled the world? How came it on the theory of unbelieving critics that these scraps and tatters somehow came together, and gave us this great result? To change the figure. What stones the building

is made of we can never tell. One thing is certain. Not only does it contain a true history, but it is a house not made with hands.

(3) Another point is the blending of the Divine and the human that runs through all the story. For Christ, as pictured in the Gospels, is not described as a Shakespeare, or a Newton, or a Mozart of the spiritual world, but as God. And yet He is most human, most humble, and the Divinity and humanity, the exaltation and the humiliation, go constantly together. It was He Who washed the feet that were stabbed by the thorns of life and soiled by its dust, but He did it knowing that He came from God and went to God. He said: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and stretched out His arms to receive

the worn world. But He, being weary with His journey, sat by the well-side, and was content to be served. When we realise this His miracles appear inevitable, for He came not to disturb order but to remove the disorder which moral evil had introduced into the life of humanity. So the world, as it gazes on Him Who has renewed the face of the earth, understands that it is the gentleness of the Divine will that draws nearer and nearer to the empty sanctuary of the heart in the humanity of the Son of God. The passionate love which this Gospel story kindles when it is fully comprehended is a love that never could be given to any heart that did not come into the closest fellowship with our own.

(4) In so brief a discussion we can only touch the main points, but the earnest reader of the Gospels cannot fail to observe

almost from the beginning of the story the deliberate movement of the Lord's life towards death. In most of the great stories of the world the enduring passages are those which show how the ceaseless call of the eternal world is heard at last and obeyed, heard sometimes when the noise of life is loudest. Our Lord's short life from its earliest moment was touched with the shadow of death, and yet for Him death was not what it was for His brethren. The life was not idyllic, as Renan has painted it. To think of it so is to miss its meaning from the start. Its colour all through is the sacrificial colour, for Christ came not to be the mere Example, but also the Uplifter and the Redeemer of the world. We mark how as He drew near the close there were outbursts from a profound deep of sorrow. It was not that He

had any secret remorse ravaging His heart. There had been no moment of madness in His holy years, no moment that He longed and prayed to pluck from out the past.[1] There had been no moral tragedy, though He had His conflict with the enemy. No, His grief was not for Himself; it was for us. It was a burden of sympathy. He had come to deal not with our sorrows only, not with our darkness only. He had come to save us from our sins, and all the forces of His nature were strained that He might deliver us. And the load of our guilt, the chastisement of our peace, was upon Him all His years. Towards the end His burden-bearing is made more manifest. The secrets of His heart are more fully disclosed, but all the story is of one piece.

[1] Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, xix. ad fin.

(5) This leads us naturally to say a word of the testimony the Gospel bears to His sinlessness. Unless the story was a true story, how could it have been written? How could the Sinless have been imagined? Even to paint the ideal, or what we are content to call the ideal, as we have seen, taxed the greatest minds. But to picture the Sinless needs something more than truth. It needs inspiration, for Christ's disciples who had been with Him in the narrow chamber, in the little boat, who had sat with Him partaking of the same rough fare, who had walked by His side, would not only have detected Him if He had once been selfish or hasty or false, but they would have been sure to misunderstand Him when He was most wise and pure and true. But they had no doubt that His glory was the glory of the Only

Begotten, and they succeeded in giving us the figure of the Sinless. The pencil does not swerve; and yet how inevitable it was that it should swerve had another Hand not held it! One false note would have destroyed all, but that false note never comes. Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount and He lived it. More important even than the testimony of the disciples is the testimony of Christ Himself. He was born with the Jewish conscience, which had been taught the knowledge of sin which comes from the law, and yet He had no consciousness of sin. He was keenly aware of sin in others, and fiercely scourged the Pharisees for their lack of moral discernment.[1] The Pharisee ought to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," but our

[1] Renan, when asked once what he made of sin, answered airily, "I suppress it."

Lord never said that, never could have said that. He prayed on the Cross, "Father, forgive *them*"; but He never said, "Father, forgive *Me*." In a word, He had no consciousness of sin. His foes and His friends attested His innocence, and His own attestation is greater. He looked round and said calmly, "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" If He was sinless, then we have entered historically the region of miracle, for the moral miracle is as great as any physical miracle can be.[1] Admit moral miracle, and you break in pieces what is called the modern view of the world, and make it easy to accept the story of Christ in its natural meaning. As Dr. Bruce himself has said, "with belief in the virgin

[1] "A *sinless* Christ is as great a miracle as a Christ who can walk on the water" (Bruce, *Hum. of Chr.*, p. 208, n. 1).

birth is apt to go belief in the virgin life, as not less than the other a part of the veil that must be taken away that the true Jesus may be seen as He was—a morally defective man, better than most, but not perfectly good."[1] This subject, however, demands fuller discussion, and in our next chapter we shall take up the Sinlessness of Jesus.

The earnest bewildered inquirer should lay aside every book until he has in some degree mastered the four Gospels. If he is sincere and patient he will, we believe, see in the end that the history is a true history, and that Christ is the only Saviour. It must be remembered, however, that in every realm the vision is the measure of the man. "For my part," said one to a great critic, "I never could admire Shakespeare." "I

[1] *Apologet.*, p. 410.

admired *him*," was the critic's laconic comment. In this sphere of religion, humility, and pain, and need, and soul travail, and a pure intent are the indispensable conditions of insight. Even the dimmest realisation of the Christ is the opening of the everlasting doors. "I seem to see a man who walks in uncertainty, a napkin over his eyes. It is loosened little by little, and the instant the handkerchief falls he finds himself in the face of the Sun." There is

> "A deep beneath the deep,
> And a height above the height;
> Our hearing is not hearing,
> And our seeing is not sight."

V

The Sinlessness of Jesus

IN his article on the book, *Supernatural Religion*, Mr. John Morley intimates that he could say something in disparagement of the lofty character of Jesus, but that he does not wish to say it. Why should he shrink? In writing about Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Morley, we may be sure, will not hesitate to point out certain imperfections in his nature and career. Mr. Morley did not shrink because he was then particularly careful of sensitive religious susceptibilities. How much care for them did he show when he descended into the

dreary ineptitude—not to use stronger words—of spelling the name of God with a small "g"? Renan claimed for himself the absolute coldness which proposed as its only object to take note of the most delicate and the most severe shades of truth. Yet when he wrote his Life of Christ for the people, he expunged the frank passages in his famous book, passages such as that in which he argued that Christ countenanced a fictitious resurrection of Lazarus arranged by the sisters. He omitted also what he had said about Christ's devouring fanaticism. These were fit for his scientific readers; but he was willing to make concession to the preference of the vulgar for a popular hero. So, without in the least changing his real opinion, he indulged the general appetite for a stainless figure, and erased all the traces of fanaticism and finesse. To do that was

to forget that, after all, truth is sacredness, and sacredness is truth, and that deception in any and every form can in the end work nothing but evil. Yet we will not bear too hardly on Morley and Renan. What we are convinced lay at the back of their reticence was the feeling that if Christ were once proved to be frail and stained like the rest of us, the glory of the world would be quenched.

In dealing with the later criticism of Christ and the Gospels, we are compelled to say much about Strauss and Renan, simply because they sincerely endeavour to solve the problems which sceptical criticism is so loth to face. To the apparatus of criticism there is practically no addition since their time, none at least of cardinal importance. It would be the merest affectation to say that the new critics are in any way com-

parable in intellectual strength either to Strauss or Renan. They attempt to dissolve the history by analysis. They take away from us the foundations of faith. When we ask, "What do you give us in room of what you have removed?" they are silent. They hint at the kind of life of Christ that might be written from the few torn fragments left to them, but they shrink from the task of building again what they think they have shattered, of clothing what they think they have disrobed. But we are entitled to say that, if they deprive humanity of the great and solemn object of its trust, they are bound to tell what they have to place in its stead. Not that we believe they can make any other answer than the answers of Strauss and Renan. There is no rest for them, as we shall see, save what may be found at the bottom of the abyss.

Was our Lord without sin, as He claimed, as His apostles testified, as His Church has believed? The record is before us. Where are the traces of sinfulness? The attempt to impugn His character from the record has so completely broken down that the endeavour is now to show that He Himself acknowledged His sinfulness. One alleged instance, brought forward by Dr. Schmiedel, is Christ's saying to the young ruler: "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One—that is God." Dr. Bruce himself has dealt so admirably with this passage that we cannot do better than reproduce his exegesis.[1] "To the seeker after eternal life, who accosted Him as '*Good* Master,' He addressed the sharp interrogation, 'Why callest thou Me good?' as if to say, 'Make not goodness a matter

[1] *Apologet.*, p. 340.

of compliment; call no man good till you know what goodness is, and whether the person to whom you apply the epithet deserves it.' Yet, while virtually advising this inquirer to suspend his judgment as to the applicability of the epithet 'good' to Himself, Jesus, we note, invited him to immediate discipleship: 'Go, sell that thou hast, and come, follow Me.' Had he complied with the invitation, he would gradually have learned the nature of true goodness, and that the Master he had chosen as his guide was indeed good." Another of Dr. Schmiedel's few pillars for a scientific Life of Christ is the great saying of Christ, "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him." This he wishes us to take as a case in which Christ suggested that He was not without sin! We shall again call in Dr.

Bruce to make an effective reply. He says that this so-called exposure of the faults of Jesus is but a sorry, pitiful business after all, and that those who practise it are sorely in need of the compassionate regard of Him they criticise, and Who benignantly said, "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him."

(1) Amongst those who refuse to accept the full catholic doctrine of the person and work of Christ there are few—their number is diminishing—who take up the position that Christ was sinless. Schleiermacher taught that in Christ the ideal of humanity was for the first time realised, although he did not recognise fully the Incarnation of God. Dr. Bruce ranks Martineau after Channing as holding the same view,[1] though

[1] Cf. *Seat of Authority*, p. 651.

we very much doubt whether Martineau, in his later period at least, would have made any such admission. In fact, he has written passages which apparently affirm the imperfection of Christ. We ought to rejoice, however, when such a view is held, however little it may hang together with other parts of the thinker's system. When the sinlessness of Christ is acknowledged, we are no longer disputing about miracle. The region of the miraculous has been entered. There is the possibility at least, and the beginning of a true Christian faith. But no one, we may confidently say, will hold long to the belief in the sinlessness of Christ without being compelled to recognise the rest of our Lord's claims. The sinlessness of Christ will not at once prove Divinity. But it will prove credibility, and those who hear the beloved Son

cannot misunderstand the meaning and the immensity of His claims.

(2) There is another school of critics, who admit that Christ was much better than most people, but deny that He was sinless. They know that to affirm sinlessness is to pass from naturalism to supernaturalism. Thus Weizsäcker, who has had a very great influence on recent criticism in this country, says that Christ's perfection was similar to that of Paul or of another devoted man. Keim is of the same mind, and probably Ewald and Matthew Arnold and Dr. Abbott, though they are so reluctant to attribute fault to Christ that it is difficult to be quite sure of their position. It has to be said, however, that to admit sinfulness, even in homeopathic measures, is to destroy the Christian redemption. One thing at least is certain,

that a sinner cannot save sinners. The Gospel for mankind is not merely a recovery of man from his moral weakness, but a deliverance of man from his guilt. Till the consciousness of sin and guilt is present in the heart, much in the revelation of Christ will remain inexplicable. One of Baur's friends and admirers wrote after his death, in words which were meant to be laudatory: "His was a completely objective nature. *No trace of personal needs or struggles is discoverable in connection with his investigations of Christianity.* The positive beliefs which he had carried with him from the period of youth, he suffered to remain as they were until scientific inquiry had shown them to be untenable." The key to this lock is the sense of sin; but Baur was a stranger to the requirements of his own soul, and his need of a Saviour. Once admit a tincture

of moral failure in Christ, and Christianity as a religion of redemption is in ruins.[1]

(3) Nevertheless, it is true that many people in these days find it easy to accept the belief that Christ was a good man, not a perfect man, but far above the ordinary level of humanity, and admirable in much of His teaching. This we take to be the position of Tolstoy. This school of thinkers holds that what the human race needs principally is teaching, and that by teaching the world may be redeemed, so far as it

[1] The sense of sin a characteristic of the saints. "Quum a socio audisset [Franciscus Assisiensis, vir ille Seraphicus] fur, sacrilegus, homicida, incestus, ebriosus, et quidquid criminum in scelerosissimum quemvis congeri potest, confractus egit gratias, confessus illum nihil esse mentitum. Miranti socio cur ita loqueretur: Haec, inquit, omnia et his sceleratiora patraram, nisi me numinis favor servasset" (Erasm. *Exeq. Seraph.* apud *Colloq.*).

can be redeemed, perhaps so far as it needs to be redeemed. Is this position tenable? Is it possible to allow that Jesus was a good man if His awful claims are denied? We believe it is not possible, and this is the belief of the more consistent and thoroughly naturalistic critics of Christ. They are compelled, in reading the Gospels, to admit that if Christ is not worthy of the worship of men, He is not worthy of their respect.

(*a*) We ask our readers to take, not all the four Gospels, the Synoptics will answer the purpose as well as the fourth Gospel, and apply this argument for themselves. Dr. Knight has done it very practically in a letter to Dr. Martineau, published in his book, *Inter Amicos*, and we are satisfied to reproduce his argument. It is an argument which the simplest Christian

can follow and understand, and, as has been said before, the Christian Church cannot suffer this business to be left to the so-called experts. The claim of Christ is lifelong, unfaltering, calm, and repeated. When it is set aside, the character of the claimant is lost. For example, when Christ read from the roll of Isaiah in the Synagogue of Nazareth, and added: "This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears," can we honour Him if He was merely an ordinary Jew? When, at the close of the Sermon on the Mount, He said that men would call Him Lord, Lord, and that they would say they had done wonders in His name, and He would reply, "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity," was He not claiming to be the Master and the Judge of souls? When He cut into the sacred ties that bind humanity, and said, "If a

man come unto Me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children, he cannot be My disciple," can we respect Him if He is speaking as a mere man, as a sinful human being? Must He not transcend humanity if this word is other than imbecile, arrogant? When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," did not Jesus bless the witness-bearer, and tell him that flesh and blood had not revealed the secret? When He said that if any one should offend one of the little ones who believed in Him, it were better he were drowned in the sea, who was speaking? When He arrogated to Himself the position of Judge of the sinful, entitled to say to the impenitent, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire," is He speaking as a sinful man, is He speaking as a mere man? If He is, it is impossible not to say that

He is uttering great swelling words of vanity, and by reason of that vanity is lower than the meek and humble saints of God. No, He claimed to be a King, and said that He would give a Kingdom; and by what right did He claim not only the Throne, but the power to ordain the Throne to His faithful followers? We need not labour this point. It is so plain that we defy any reader of the Gospels to go through one of them seriously without seeing that even to admit sinfulness in Christ is not to admit a mere tincture of fault, but to admit a character so egregiously vain and self-deluded as to fall much below the average standard.

(*b*) But there is more to say. If we deny that Christ was sinless, if we deny that He was the Redeemer of the world, is it possible to evade the ultimate conclusions of Renan and Strauss? Renan pictures Christ as a

serene and simple country prophet in His youth, with a profound apprehension of the Fatherhood of God, nourished on the Messianic dreams of the New Testament and on the wisdom of Hillel. He describes for us the beauty of His early ministry, and His degeneration when He came to insist on His own claim. "Oh," says the Frenchman, "if He had but died after preaching the only absolute religion by the Well of Samaria!" But He went on, and had at last to play a part which became so intolerable that He had to die, almost to commit religious suicide, that He might deliver Himself from its fatal necessities! Weizsäcker published in a German review, some twenty years ago, a curiously pathetic paper written by Strauss after the appearance of the first volume of his Life of Jesus. In this he pleaded that he might continue in

the service of the church of Wurtemberg. His mythical theory, he admits, cannot be preached before a congregation; but he can find in some parts of the Gospel the embodiment of ideas in the form of history. Strauss, as we know, lived to condemn Christianity as an utter delusion, to denounce Christ as a deceiver, to deny the existence of a personal God and the immortality of the soul.

No, Christ was sinless, or He was the grand deceiver of the world. "He is a good man," say some who do not allow His sinlessness; but they can never hold out against the charge, "Nay, but He deceiveth the people."[1] Admit His sinlessness, and all the rest goes with it. We hear

[1] The author of *Supernatural Religion* in the early editions of his book paid a high tribute to the character of Jesus, but afterwards withdrew it.

Him, and obey Him, and believe Him, and know Him to be our Redeemer and our Lord. The imperious and awful confidence with which He speaks fills our hearts with peace. It has been miserably objected that, even if He was sinless, He did nothing for the intellectual or artistic progress of the world. Well, He did not come to be the drawing-master or the scientific tutor of mankind. His name was called Jesus because He was to save His people from their sins, and He has been and is to-day mighty to save—able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. Yet art and science and philosophy have received a new life from Him. With the risen Saviour all things rise. Read the Gospels in their natural meaning, and the historical reality of Christ is proved. The Church did not create Him, for it had no

colours to paint the picture. No meaner hand than truth could have drawn it. Therefore, in the Gospels we have the story of a true descent of God in the midst of us, and Christ created the Church. There was One other than the rest; One Who was strong among the weak, erect among the fallen, believing among the faithless, clean among the defiled, and living among the dead; One Who, being whole, gave His life for the sick.

We have next to discuss the Resurrection of our Lord.

VI

The Resurrection of our Lord from the Dead

WHEN Strauss' first Life of Christ was published, an eminent critic said that his theories would be shattered against such facts as the Resurrection of our Lord and the conversion of St. Paul. So it has turned out. In dealing with the Resurrection of Christ we shall first of all state the meaning of the fact, next adduce its evidences, and in conclusion examine the explanations of its deniers. Students will see that, in criticising the explanations, we make much use of Strauss' first Life of Jesus. We do so partly because no one can say that Strauss

was prejudiced on the side of orthodoxy, but also because he of all those who have measured swords with Christ was the strongest, the ablest, the most candid, the most loyal to the facts as he conceived them. No other sceptical critic can lay claim to a more piercing genius, to a genius which, like a flash, often lightens up in an instant the tangled underwood of thought, and attains its goal at once.

I.—When Jesus died, the spirit which He had commended to the holy hands of the Father was received. The crucified body was laid in the grave. On the third day the grave was left empty, the Redeemer had risen to a new life.

"One place alone had ceased to hold its prey,
A form had pressed it; and was there no more;
The garments of the grave beside it lay,
Where once they wrapped Him, on the rocky floor.

"He only with returning footsteps broke
The eternal calm wherewith the tomb was bound;
Among the sleeping dead alone He woke,
And blessed with outstretched hands the hosts around."

He was not called back to the life of mortality. His body was transfigured into fresh lustre and beauty. It was the glorified body of the Resurrection. It was the same body that had been committed to the tomb and yet it was not the same, for it was revivified and transformed, and past the dominion of death for ever. In this body He manifested Himself to His disciples, and as His body could not live to die, He took leave of the world in the quiet triumph of the Ascension. The Resurrection and the Ascension go together. Christ's body, if it had remained on earth, would have been with us still; but it was expedient

for us that He should go away, and a cloud received Him from the sight of the faithful. The two points on which faith must fasten are the empty grave and the ascension of the glorified body into the heavens. To all these there is the unbroken testimony of the New Testament. There is a strange and not quite honest effort on the part of some in these days to accept the Resurrection of Christ in words while actually denying it. But to talk of the resurrection of the spirit is preposterous. The spirit does not die, and therefore cannot rise. What is meant by those who hold such opinions is that the life of Jesus is, like any other life, persistent beyond death! But that has nothing to do with the resurrection of the New Testament, and nothing to do with resurrection of any kind. The one resurrection of which the New Testa-

ment knows, the one resurrection that allows to language any meaning, is the resurrection of the body, the resurrection which leaves the grave empty.

II.—The Resurrection of our Lord from the dead is in a sense the greatest of miracles, and needs to be proved by clear evidence. What happened when Jesus died on the Tree? Those who slew Him had no doubt. He had been defeated, stricken into powerless silence. What did His disciples think? Did they understand that His death did not end all, that it was in itself a triumph to be followed by the triumphs of His Resurrection, His Ascension, His Session on the Eternal Throne? On the contrary, they were weighed down, discomforted, overborne by thoughts of gloom, defeat, and death. They were stupefied and silent mourners, whilst He—the Sword

of the Spirit—was quiet in the holy grave. Nothing is more certain than the hopelessness of the disciples, and it is that which gives such extraordinary weight to their witness. The stories of the Gospel cannot here be examined in detail, but no reader can fail to see the moods of the disciples—the bewilderment, the despair, the dawning bliss, the half-believing rapture ending at last in an undying joy, and coming from the sober certainty that the Lord was risen indeed, and that the whole face of life and death had been changed. Now the question is what took place between the deep depression at the death of Jesus and the triumph that followed? What was it that made the sheep, so panic-stricken when the Shepherd was smitten on Good Friday, bold as lions on the day of Pentecost? The answer of the Gospels is that the

Resurrection had happened. How can we account for the wave of strength and hope that suddenly swept over the deeply despondent disciples, and made them the conquerors of the world? Between the blank despair and the exultant gladness are we to place a delusion, a lie?[1] No, between them we place the risen Lord, and nothing but the fact of His triumph will explain how those who had been trying in vain to deaden the agony of disappointment were suddenly filled with life and might and

[1] "To read the history of the Christian Church without the belief that Christ has been in vital and organic relation with it, seems to me to read it under the impression that a profound illusion can, for centuries, exercise more power for good than the truth. . . . I cannot understand the history of the Christian Church at all, if all the fervent trust which has been stirred by faith in the actual inspirations of a nature at once eternal and human, has been lavished on a dream."—Hutton, *Theol. Ess.*, VII.

courage, realising that when their Master made the step from old things to new, He made it for all His brethen.

Again, we have the uncontradicted testimony of St. Paul, a testimony which appears the more weighty the longer it is studied. We find the witness in the first extant New Testament writing, the first Epistle to the Thessalonians: "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven Whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus." "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." They are right who say that the Apostle is appealing to the unquestioned and universal belief of Christians. In 1 Corinthians xv. 5–7 St. Paul with calm precision enumerates

five appearances of the Lord after His Resurrection. He also reminds the Corinthians of what he had delivered to them *first of all*,[1] throwing back the date of his evidence some years, probably from the year 55 to 51. It is to be noted that, though some in the apostolic age had doubts about the resurrection of Christians, there were apparently none as to the Resurrection of Christ.[2] Paul made his appeal to a fact which admitted of no denial. He was speaking in the presence of contemporaries who might still be cross-questioned, with whom he had come into the closest relationship, who had the

[1] *I.e.*, taking ἐν πρώτοις as = ἐξ ἀρχῆς (So Chrysostom; cf. Euth. Zig., τουτέστι πρότερον, ἐξ ἀρχῆς, ὅτε ἐδίδαξα ὑμᾶς). Otherwise "*chiefly*": "Quae maximi momenti sunt, *in primis* doceri debent" (Baug.). So Meyer, Findlay.

[2] 1 Cor. xv. 12–19.

means, and in some cases the will, to criticise him if they saw cause. Further, the Apostle claims to have seen the Lord himself. "Have not I seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" "Last of all He was seen of me also as of one born out of due time." He has been talking of the other Apostles as having seen the risen Lord, and ranks his sight with theirs. In other words St. Paul's was not a subjective vision; it was an actual beholding with the bodily eyes. There was no doubt a mystic element in St. Paul, a perpetual side-door for him into the unseen, a power of detaching himself from all sensible surroundings. But his claim to be an Apostle was not based on these inner secrets of his history, but on the fact that he had seen the Lord, and his whole life had been revolutionised. This

is not the place in which to dwell on St. Paul's rich expositions and applications of the fact of the Resurrection. They all start from his recognition of Christ as one who had broken through the immemorial law and rule of death. Apart from the Resurrection, St. Paul knew of no Christianity. Baur says the Apostle regards the Resurrection of Jesus as the principal doctrine of the Christian faith. "If Christ be not risen," said the Apostle, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." We are dealing, it will be noticed, with an universal conviction, what Strauss himself calls "a world-wide deception."

III.—Is it possible to explain these facts away? Baur[1] declined the attempt. He assumed the faith in the Resurrection as

[1] *Kirchengesch. der Drei Erst. Jahrh.*, p. 40.

indisputable, and declined to attempt the tracing of its origins. It is fair to say, with Dr. Bruce,[1] that his "reserve may have been due in part to prudential considerations, but it was due also doubtless to a vivid sense of the unsatisfactoriness of all past attempts to account for the belief in Christ's rising from the dead on naturalistic principles." We need not waste time on the hypothesis that the whole matter was a fraudulent conspiracy on the part of Jesus or His disciples, or both combined.[2] Christianity is not founded upon rottenness. What explanation does such a supposition give of the bounding and thrilling joy which was the mood of the Church? "Men of all schools in

[1] *Apolog.*, p. 384.

[2] The Jewish chief-priests (Matt. xxviii. 11–15); Reimarus, *Wolfenb. Fragm.* (das 5te Frag. in Lessing's 4tem Beitr.); the English Deist Woolston (*Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour*).

modern times would be ashamed to identify themselves with so base a suggestion."[1] There are, however, three hypotheses which may be briefly stated and examined.

(1) It is suggested that Christ was not dead when He was taken from the Cross. He was merely in a swoon caused by pain and exhaustion. From this swoon He wakened, in His grave, and came out and showed Himself to His disciples.[2] This notion, current before Strauss, has had no reputable advocate we know of in recent times except Huxley, who, however great as a man of science, was a child in Biblical criticism.[3] Yet it was elaborately worked

[1] Bruce, *Apolog.*, p. 385.

[2] Paulus, *exeg. Handb.*, 3, b, S. 785 sqq.; *Leb. Jes.*, I. b, S. 281 sqq.: Schuster, in Eichhorn's *allg. Bibl.*, 9, S. 1053.

[3] It is elaborately expounded, though not deliberately adopted, by S. Butler in *The Fair Haven.*

out before Strauss[1] gave it its death-blow, and in ways that suggest much to the imagination. It was said,[2] for example, that Christ, on first coming out of the tomb, weak and sick, was obliged to remain by the grave, that His wounded body was so sensitive that He could not bear that Mary Magdalene should touch Him (!), that He borrowed clothes from the gardener who dwelt near the grave, that as He recovered His strength He ventured upon walks, and that, after long intervals of retirement, He was able to let Thomas touch His wounds. It was imagined that the white-robed messengers of the Resurrection were Essenes, that Christ retired with them to an Essene lodge, and there at last died quietly, with

[1] *Leb. Jes.*, III., IV., § 140.

[2] *Vide* Strauss, *Leb. Jes.*, III., IV., § 139, S. 613 sq., 618.

none beside Him that knew His strange and terrible secret.[1] Another writer[2] imagined that Christ went on for long silently working for the welfare of mankind, but in ways of which we know nothing save in connection with the story of the conversion of St. Paul. Did He perish unknown, perhaps in some journey among the hills, leaving His body to be unburied or buried by strangers? The answer to this is simple and conclusive. Such a Christ, with unhealed wounds, spectral, feverish, marred, could only have weakened by His resusci-

[1] Strauss, *Leb. Jes.*, III., IV., § 137, S. 87: "es werden dieselben gewesen sein, welche bei der sogenannten Verklärungsgeschichte mit ihm zusammenkamen, vielleicht Essener, welche sich weiss zu kleiden pflegten, und was dergleichen aus der Mode gekommene Vermuthungen eines Bahrdtisch-Venturini'schen Pragmatismus mehr sind."

[2] J. A. Brennecke, see Keim, *Jesu von Nazara* VI. 328 (English translation).

tation the impression He made upon men in life and in death. Such a Jesus could not be the risen Conqueror and the Son of God. Such a Jesus could not be the author of the Resurrection joy and triumph. As Strauss says,[1] He "could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm or have lifted their reverence into worship."

(2) There is the suggestion of visions. It is argued that the believing company were in a fit state of mind for seeing the dead Christ alive again.[2] Mary Magdalene, susceptible, hysterical, excited, expecting, thought she heard a slight noise, and that He called her "Mary." Or it is suggested that, by brooding on the Scriptures in Galilee, and visiting the old haunts, the

[1] *New Life*, I. 412.

[2] Renan, *Les Apôtres*, p. 2 sq.; Strauss, *Leb. Jesu*, III, IV., S. 633 sqq.

disciples gradually got into the state of mind out of which visions spring. The objections are numerous and insuperable. If the repetition of the same delusion in many different minds is possible, it is possible only in an atmosphere of heated and fanatical expectation of a certain event. But we know there was no expectation. We know that in the upper chamber the doors of which were closed for fear of the Jews, there was nought but sorrow and sighing. Let it be remembered that the disciples thought not only that they saw Christ, but that they conversed with Him, that the interviews were held in various circumstances, and that there were many witnesses. It is admitted by Strauss himself[1] that such a state of mind could only have been developed in a considerable time.

[1] Strauss, *ut supra*, S. 639.

But the Gospel narrative begins them in three days, and ends them in little more than a month. Dr. Abbott holds that these visions continued nearly a year. Keim says that time is essential; but time cannot be given, and he rejects the hypothesis as without any reason. Nor would such subjective and morbid fancies, even if they could be conceived, account for the work and testimony and witness of the disciples on behalf of the risen Lord. Such feverish dreams would have ended in gloom, paralysis, and impotence. As the Christian Church is not built upon rottenness, so it is not built on mist.

(3) The last theory is that of Keim, and it is instructive as showing the desperate nature of the problem Keim [1] says that

[1] *Jesu von Nazara*, Band III., S. 605 [Eng. trans., VI., p. 364].

the living spirit of Jesus sent telegrams to the disciples, telegrams which gave them a vision bearing the likeness of the body laid in the grave, and still lying there. Well, but if this be so we are back in the world of miracle. This is practically admitted by Keim; and Pfleiderer, the latest commentator on Strauss, complains that Keim "abandons the basis of strict history in the case of the story of the Resurrection of Jesus, and made concessions to supernaturalistic dogma; as the sequel of which the old doctrine of miracles may be readmitted into Lives of Jesus, as is really the case in the works of Beyschlag and Weiss." It has further been pointed out[1] that this hypothesis really means that Christ deceives His people. He induces the disciples, and therefore the whole

[1] Bruce, *Apolog.*, p. 393.

Christian Church, to believe a lie. It may well be said that this is a poor foundation, to build Christianity upon a bastard supernaturalism, as difficult for unbelievers as the true supernaturalism of the New Testament, and by believers to be rejected. We are not quite sure that Dr. Bruce is right in saying that Strauss could not have conceived of such a hypothesis.[1] Strauss took the view that Spinoza also postulated a miracle to explain the belief in the Resurrection. Further, he had before him the supposition of Weisse that the departed spirit of Jesus really acted on the disciples whom He had left behind.[2]

The more the evidence is examined, the more clearly is the crowning miracle of

[1] III. IV. § 140, S. 629.; Spinoza, Ep. XXIII. ad Henr. Oldenburg, p. 558 sq., ed. Gfrörer.

[2] *Die evang. Gesch.*, 2, § 426 sq.

Christianity established; and nowadays the tendency on the part of deniers is to attempt no explanation at all, but take refuge in the general assertion of the impossibility of the supernatural. But, as has well been said, it is better to believe in the supernatural than to believe in the ridiculous, and that is what it comes to. The Resurrection gives us the risen Lord, and His past and present contact with the souls of men. Meanwhile the words of Pressensé deserve to be pondered: "The empty tomb of Christ has been the cradle of the Church, and if in this foundation of her faith the Church has been mistaken, she must needs lay herself down by the side of the mortal remains, I say, not of a man, but of a religion."

VII

Christ's Triumphant Captives

WE come now to discuss the Christ of experience. The experience of Christ's delivering power in the soul is more than sufficient for all who know it. It makes them reasonably impatient of apologetics. What need have we of any further witness? They ask that the case should be stopped. But we are writing for shaken and doubting believers, and for those who are not believers at all, for those whose inward experience is insufficient as evidence, and for those who have no experience. Experience, it is often urged, is no argument

for the outsider, but if the transforming power of Christ manifests itself in outward action, the outward result can be stated as a proof. The phenomena of Christianity are not hidden from the world. What passes within the sanctuary of the soul is not wholly concealed. In stating the argument from experience we shall speak of what is manifested first in the conversion of souls and next in their sanctification.

In one of his raptures St. Paul said: "Thanks be to God, Who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ."[1] That is, he conceived of himself as led about by Christ

[1] 2 Cor. ii. 14. *θρίαμβος*: *ἐπίδειξις νίκης, πομπὴ, καὶ τὸ σεμνύεσθαι* (Suidas). "Latinis triumphari dicuntur, qui victi ducuntur in triumpho. Sic miles quoque qui navavit bonam operam in bello, ducitur in triumpho honoris causa, ut particeps sit suo duci" (Erasm.). Is not this St. Paul's idea? He was led in triumph as a victor.

as a great captive overcome, imprisoned, made powerless. The words are translated in the Authorised Version, "Thanks be unto God, Who always causeth us to triumph in Christ," and though this is an error in rendering, it is a truth of fact. St. Paul was indeed Christ's captive, but he was more than that. He was Christ's triumphant captive. In the old days of triumphing conquerors the captives were led about with savage, tortured, vengeful hearts. In the Christian captivity it is far otherwise.[1] The triumph of Christ is their triumph, and He would not glory in having captured them if He had not captured heart and soul and will. St. Paul is a captive, a prisoner, a slave of Jesus Christ, but he exults in his

[1] Francis of Sales: "In the royal galley of Divine Love there is no force—the rowers are all volunteers."

bonds, vaunts himself of his fetters, and wears them as proudly and lightly as a girl wears the bracelet which her lover has clasped round her happy arm. St. Paul takes the outstanding place in a long line of triumphant captives stretching on and on to the Coming and the Throne of Christ. It is of these captives and their captivity that we are now to write.

It is owned that the conversion of St. Paul is one of the principal evidences of the Resurrection and the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Exceptional as were its circumstances, he himself claimed, and claimed rightly, that his conversion was a pattern, in other words, that all conversions are essentially of the same type. We do not wish to overstate any argument, and will therefore be content with the words of Dr. Edwin Hatch, who was certainly no

traditionalist. Dr. Hatch admits, or perhaps we should say contends, that while there are differences in the accounts of St. Paul's conversion, these do not constitute a valid argument against the general truth of the narrative. "Against all the difficulties and apparent incredibilities of the narratives there stand out the clear and indisputable facts that the persecutor was suddenly transformed into a believer, and that to his dying day he never ceased to believe and to preach that he had seen Jesus Christ. Nor was it only that he had seen Him; the Gospel which he preached, as well as the call to preach it, was due to this revelation." Scholars now generally admit that until the moment when God revealed His Son in Paul the persecutor had no suspicion that Christ and His followers were in the right. He knew of the Crucifixion, but to him the

Resurrection was utterly incredible. He always maintained, even in the very passion of his humility, that when he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, an injurer of his Lord, he was not sinning against the light so far as he saw it.[1] His heart, indeed, was tortured by the conviction that neither he nor his people could perfectly fulfil that legal righteousness without which it was impossible to attain salvation. But that Christ should deliver him from the curse of the law was the last thought of his mind. It was the actual appearance of Jesus Christ which convinced him that Jesus was risen, and was risen as the Messias and the Son of God. The conviction came to him as with the roar of a cataract, and from that moment all his life was changed. The persecutor became

[1] Ἀλλὰ ἠλεήθην, ὅτι ἀγνοῶν ἐποίησα ἐν ἀπιστίᾳ (1 Tim. i. 13).

Christ's servant and lover,[1] and died as His martyr.

Now when we read the long roll of Christ's captives, we shall see that every conversion has in it the element of change, that life becomes nobly new, that it turns in another direction, that it seeks other ends.[2] We shall also find that in each conversion there is the consciousness of a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ and a

[1] Cf. Ignat. *ad Rom.* vii. § 2: ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρως ἐσταύρωται.

[2] "This experience has been repeated and testified to by countless millions of civilised men and women in all nations and all degrees of culture. It signifies not whether the conversion be sudden or gradual, though, as a psychological phenomenon, it is more remarkable when sudden and there is no symptom of mental aberration otherwise. . . . In all cases it is not a mere change of belief or opinion: this is by no means the point; the point is that it is a modification of character, more or less profound" (G. J. Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, pp. 162 sq.).

revelation of His love, of a love that warms, and draws, and welcomes. We are speaking of conversion as admitted by all Christians, and not raising any question about Christian nurture or the efficacy of sacraments. Take every conversion from Augustine's to Bunyan's, from Bunyan's to Thomas Scott's, from Scott's to the conversion of this morning, and the type is not altered. All are sudden, though not all are felt to be sudden. Many, indeed, appear to be gentle and gradual, nor is it possible to point to one hour or one place in the history and say: "There and then I was changed." But every Christian recognises that a change did come to pass, that before that change there was alienation from God and Christ, that after that change a new relationship was constituted, and another element entered into the life. Nor is the

world so blind that it altogether fails to see.[1] It can never realise the truth in the way that the subjects of saving grace realise it, never know what conversion means to those whose souls have suddenly opened, who have seen the light above the brightness of the sun shine upon their way, for whom a new lustre has fallen on river and meadow, on man and woman and child and God.[2] It can never know all that conversion means to those who have turned

[1] Cf. the influence on Bunyan of the "three or four poor women sitting at a door, in the sun, talking about the things of God" (*Gr. Ab.*, § 37).

[2] "I was now so taken with the love and mercy of God that I remember I could not tell how to contain till I got home: I thought I could have spoken of his love, and have told of his mercy to me, even to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me, had they been capable to have understood me" (Bunyan, *Gr. Ab.*, § 92.

their trust and enthusiasm to Christ in heaven, who have fallen in love with immortal goodness, who have risen above the region of ineffectual strife, who have known the emancipating power of their great faith and affection, and to whom the living Christ, the risen Lord, is the great reality. But we may quote one testimony. Mark Rutherford says: "I can assure my incredulous literary friends that years ago it was not uncommon for men and women suddenly to wake to the fact that they had been sinners, and to affirm that henceforth they would keep God's commandments by the help of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. What is more extraordinary is that they did keep God's commandments for the rest of their lives."

Every conversion is like St. Paul's conversion, not an act of violence, but a

miracle. We have always felt that Christian apologists have not sufficiently met Hume's argument against miracles. The Resurrection of Christ is as well attested as any miracle can be. And yet if miracles ceased to be wrought, it might by lapse of time cease to be believed. Men might say they could not explain it; but it happened long ago, and if the facts were known there would certainly be an explanation of some sort. As a matter of fact where the Resurrection of Christ is not believed in, conversion is not believed in.[1] When the Church becomes weak and low, when converts are very rare, when the greater experience of the spiritual life apparently ceases,

[1] "The Old World knew nothing of Conversion; instead of an *Ecce Homo*, they had only some *Choice of Hercules*" (Carlyle, *Sart. Resart.*, II.).